

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SPECIAL STUDIES SERIES ON
FOREIGN AFFAIRS ISSUES

Volume
I

Soviet Diplomacy and
Negotiating Behavior:
Emerging New Context
For U.S. Diplomacy





H. Res. 469

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, U.S.,

December 6, 1979.

Resolved, That there shall be printed as a House document the volume entitled "Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior: Emerging New Context for United States Diplomacy", a study prepared at the request of the Committee on Foreign Affairs by the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress. In addition to the usual number, there shall be printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs such number of copies of the study as does not exceed a cost of \$1,200.

Attest:

EDMUND L. HENSHAW, Jr.,
Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives.

FOREWORD

The controversial style, tactics, and motivations of Soviet negotiators has long been the subject of debate and discussion. In fact, the effect of Soviet negotiating behavior on the SALT II Treaty has already figured prominently in the congressional debate on the merits of that agreement.

For these and other reasons the Committee on Foreign Affairs requested Dr. Joseph G. Whelan, senior specialist in international affairs of the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress, to conduct a comprehensive study of the issue.

Many previous studies have analyzed Soviet diplomacy in the context of single negotiating encounters. This study takes a broader and more exhaustive approach. From a historical perspective, which makes the Soviet period more meaningful, it systematically analyzes Russian negotiating behavior in terms of its principal characteristics, trends of continuity and change, and influences contributing to its formation—including the traditional Russian obsession with national security.

Central to the study is its analyses of the implications of the Soviet approach to diplomacy and negotiation for U.S. foreign policy. These implications are explored with hypotheses offered as to the future style and motives of the Soviets.

In commissioning the study, it was hoped that it would provide valuable insights to U.S. negotiators in their present and future negotiations as to the motivations, concerns, and reasons for the operating style of their Soviet counterparts.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes that the unique character and motivation of Soviet negotiating behavior should not be considered a deterrent to negotiations on the widest possible front of mutual concerns. While painstakingly developing the evolution of Soviet negotiating behavior and emphasizing its different characteristics, the study appropriately emphasizes the vital role negotiations with the Soviet Union will play with respect to prospects for a stable international order:

Diplomacy and negotiations have always had a special value for Americans. They have encompassed the national experience from the earliest days of the Republic, as a means of averting war and settling disputes with its English and Spanish neighbors and with other nations on the larger international stage since the turn of the century; as a mechanism for national territorial expansion as in the Louisiana Purchase, the Transcontinental Treaty, and the Alaska Cession; and for maintaining the lifeblood of the Nation by establishing harmonious commercial relationships with the nations of the world. Diplomacy and negotiations are thus firmly placed in the Nation's historical tradition.

In U.S. relations with the Soviet Union diplomacy and negotiations take on an even more special value because they provide the only device for bringing rationality into the management of a relationship that is fraught with great

complexities and high risks. Consider a relationship in the 1980's without diplomacy and negotiations and the consequent risks to the Nation's security of a Soviet Russia as it was in Stalin's postwar era: a total breakdown in communications; a debasement of diplomacy; and a resort to negotiations by semaphore in the manner of that ending the Berlin blockade as the only means for resolving grave disputes.

In the nuclear age, diplomacy and negotiations take on a new meaning, and, indeed, a new imperative for both the United States and the Soviet Union. For they provide the vital mechanism for survival.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs recognizes that crucial foreign affairs issues, complex in nature and with far-reaching significance to U.S. national security, require superior scholarly understanding as a foundation on which workable solutions can be based. Accordingly, the committee has undertaken to establish a "Special Studies Series on Foreign Affairs Issues." Studies in the series will be published periodically and only on conspicuously significant subjects matched by equally distinguished work. The superior quality of Dr. Whelan's study has earned it the notable distinction of being the first in that series.

The material and findings contained herein are the work of the Congressional Research Service. While coordinated with the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the material and findings do not necessarily represent the views of the Committee on Foreign Affairs or its members.

CLEMENT J. ZABLOCKI, *Chairman,*
Committee on Foreign Affairs.

LETTER OF SUBMITTAL

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE,
Washington, D.C., July 11, 1979.

Hon. CLEMENT J. ZABLOCKI,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: In response to your request, the Congressional Research Service has undertaken a study of Soviet diplomacy and negotiating behavior from the American perspective. The study, entitled "Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior: Emerging New Context for U.S. Diplomacy," has been completed and is herewith submitted.

The principal objective of this study was to examine the style, purposes, and effects of Russian behavior in diplomacy and negotiations in historical perspective and largely from the American point of view. The study raises five basic questions that pertain to: The nature of Russian negotiating behavior in the Soviet period; the principal elements that contributed to the formation of this behavior, notably the Russian obsession with security; aspects of continuity and change during 61 years of Soviet diplomacy; and the implications for American foreign policy in the 1980's.

Dr. Joseph G. Whelan, senior specialist in international affairs, prepared this study.

Sincerely,

GILBERT GUDE, Director.

(v)

B. THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS 1962: NEGOTIATIONS BY ACTION

1. BACKGROUND OF THE MISSILE CRISIS

(a) *The missile crisis as a negotiating encounter*

The Geneva summit conformed to the forms and modalities of conference diplomacy as it evolved in the postwar era. But there were exceptions to such normal behavior as in the case of the Berlin blockade of 1948-49 when "negotiations by semaphore" set into motion forces that were to end the crisis.

Negotiations in the Cuban missile crisis were similarly unique. Many channels and forms of diplomacy, traditional and unusual, were used in the negotiating process. But this encounter had the distinction of adding still another ingredient to the ongoing process; namely, the element of action. For the Cuban missile crisis was what Richard T. Davies, a veteran Foreign Service Officer, long-time specialist in Soviet and East European affairs, and recently the U.S. Ambassador to Poland, called, a classic example of "negotiations by action."⁹⁷

(b) *Kennedy on negotiating with the Soviets*

(1) *From Sorensen's perspective*

President Kennedy's attitude toward negotiating with the Soviets was positive but realistic. He accepted as a reality Khrushchev's belief in the universal triumph of communism and expected him to exploit every means fair and foul in advancing toward that goal. Still, he hoped that in time the power of the United States and its allies could persuade Khrushchev, as Theodore C. Sorensen, one of Kennedy's closest advisers, wrote:

that no safe or cheap route was open to world domination, that all channels were open for true negotiation, that any real grounds for the Soviet Union's fears could be peacefully removed, and that realistic, effective steps to accommodation—enabling Moscow to devote more energies internally—would advance the interests and security of both sides.⁹⁸

Kennedy strongly believed, more so than some of his subordinates, in the positive value of negotiating with the Soviets. As he once said, "we have nothing to fear from negotiations * * * and nothing to gain by refusing to take part in them."⁹⁹ Areas of confrontation had to be reduced through negotiations; reasonable negotiations with the Soviets were possible; and while harboring no illusions about Soviet good faith, he did not share the belief of those who held that no agreement reached with the Soviets would be kept. Nor did he share, as he said:

the illusion that negotiations for the sake of negotiations always advance the cause of peace. If for lack of preparation they break up in bitterness * * * if they are made a forum for propaganda or a cover for aggression, the processes of peace have been abused.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ At a reception given by the Polish Embassy in Washington on July 21, 1978, commemorating Poland's National Day, the writer talked informally with Ambassador Davies about this study and various characteristics of Soviet behavior in negotiations, noting particularly the Berlin crisis as an example of "negotiations by semaphore." Davies, who was an active participant in the Cuban missile crisis while serving in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow as first secretary, remarked upon reflecting about this crisis that this was a case of "negotiations by action."

⁹⁸ Sorensen, Theodore C. Kennedy. New York, Harper & Row, 1965, p. 516.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

For Kennedy, the limits of negotiations had to be carefully defined: "We cannot confine our proposals to a list of concessions we are to make," abandon commitments to the freedom or security of others, or negotiate in an environment of threats. On the occasion of the Berlin crisis in 1961 he expressed the prophetic fear that a nuclear confrontation might be needed before Khrushchev understood that his conciliation would not permit humiliation. "If he wants to rub my nose in the dirt," Kennedy said, "it's all over." On the other hand, Kennedy did not believe in advancing, what Sorensen described as, "meaningless, unattainable or obviously unacceptable proposals, or in deliberately taking ambiguous or flabby positions."¹⁰¹

Furthermore, Kennedy strongly objected to what Secretary of State Dean Rusk referred to as the "football stadium psychology" of diplomacy that measured wins or losses on a daily basis. For Kennedy, "negotiations are not a contest spelling victory or defeat." A mutual perception of improvement through a negotiated agreement was hardly an American victory; and failure in obtaining the only possible negotiated agreement that would damage American interests could hardly be called a defeat. Negotiations in seemingly endless, pointless talks were usually better than a battle. Indeed, for Kennedy the most successful diplomacy was more often dull than dramatic. Direct confrontations—what he called "collision courses"—produced drama, but, as he remarked after the Cuban missile crisis, "You can't have too many of those, because we are not sure on every occasion that the Soviet Union will withdraw."¹⁰² Nuclear devastation, he felt, could be accomplished instantly, but peace through negotiations was a long haul, "the sum of many acts."¹⁰³

Accordingly, Kennedy, who did not believe it possible to achieve any sweeping settlement of East-West problems in his administration, hoped that small breakthroughs could lead to larger ones until gradually through the process of negotiations a détente could be built, a "truce to terror," as he said, in which both sides could see that mutual accommodation was preferable to mutual annihilation.¹⁰⁴

(2) *Prelude to Cuba: Negotiating with Khrushchev at Vienna, June 3-4, 1961*

Kennedy's first and only face-to-face negotiating encounter with Khrushchev took place in Vienna during June 3-4, 1961. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.'s account fully justified Kennedy's description of this encounter to the American people as "somber" and to Prime Minister Macmillan as "grim."¹⁰⁵ The talks, according to Schlesinger, a noted American historian and adviser to Kennedy, were "civil but tough," and in laying down his ultimatum on Berlin, Khrushchev's behavior was "not quite a tirade; it was too controlled and hard and therefore the more menacing."¹⁰⁶ The general tenor of the negotiations was reflected in Schlesinger's description of the last informal Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting that centered on the main question, Berlin:

Khrushchev returned unrelentingly to the attack. The United States, he said, wanted to humiliate the Soviet Union. If the President insisted on occupation

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 516-517.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Schlesinger, Arthur M. Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1965, pp. 375 and 377.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 361 and 372.

rights after a treaty and if East German borders were violated, whether by land, sea or air, force would be met by force. The United States should prepare itself for this, and the Soviet Union would do the same.

"I want peace," said Khrushchev, "but, if you want war, that is your problem."

Kennedy said, "It is you, and not I, who wants to force a change."

Khrushchev said again that it was up to the United States to decide on peace or war. The Soviet Union had no choice but to accept the challenge. It must, and it would, respond. The treaty decision was irrevocable. He would sign in December.

Kennedy, parting, said, "It will be a cold winter."¹⁰⁷

For Kennedy, the Vienna meeting was a bruising negotiating encounter.¹⁰⁸ From the beginning Khrushchev launched an unrelenting attack; he was on the offensive and maintained that negotiating posture throughout. What the President had hoped would be an occasion to establish a rational basis for accommodation, to introduce precision into each other's assessments, and, therefore, to avoid miscalculation, confrontation, and war, turned into an attempt by Khrushchev, as Schlesinger observed, "to unnerve Kennedy and force him into concessions."¹⁰⁹ In brief, Khrushchev's negotiating behavior was in the classical mode of totalitarian diplomacy by threat and intimidation.¹¹⁰

Kennedy came away from Vienna confident that he had met the test, indeed, more than equalled the test, for he parried Khrushchev's thrusts with skillful and telling ripostes.¹¹¹ But there could now be no doubt how vast were the ideological and political differences that divided both leaders and their nations. Still, Kennedy, who had genuinely impressed Khrushchev, appraised the encounter, as he told the American people, as valuable for keeping open the channels of communications and lessening the chances of miscalculation for each side.¹¹²

Despite the intensity and pressure of the negotiations and the disappointment with the results, Kennedy came away, as Schlesinger wrote, with the belief that, "He knew how Khrushchev thought and where he stood, and that was invaluable."¹¹³ For Kennedy, Vienna was not only an occasion for taking measure of his principal adversary but also a critical time for reaffirming his faith in the value of diplomacy and negotiations as instruments of peace.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 374.

¹⁰⁸ Kennedy was "deeply disturbed," as Schlesinger noted, by this meeting with Khrushchev. Bohlen and U.S. Ambassador to Moscow Llewellyn Thompson thought the President had overreacted—Thompson told him Khrushchev's behavior was, "Par for the course." But, as Schlesinger observed, "Kennedy had never encountered any leader with whom he could not exchange ideas—anyone so impervious to reasoned argument or so apparently indifferent to the prospective obliteration of mankind. He himself had indicated flexibility and admitted error, but Khrushchev had remained unmoved and immovable." (Ibid., pp. 374-375.) Bohlen told the President, who was a "little depressed" at not having been able to make Khrushchev understand that he was seeking a détente based on a realistic balance of power in the world, that "there had been no hardening of Soviet policy. The Soviets always talk tough." (Bohlen, op. cit., p. 482.)

¹⁰⁹ Schlesinger, *Thousand Days*, p. 367.

¹¹⁰ Khrushchev knew what he was up to; he was not there to negotiate but to intimidate. At a luncheon during the meeting he remarked in a rambling speech that he objected to the language of commercial bargaining so often employed in negotiations with the Soviet Union—"you give this and we'll give that." He asked, what was he supposed to concede? (Ibid., p. 362.)

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 377.

¹¹² Kennedy was impressed both favorably and unfavorably by Khrushchev. After the first day's meeting, Schlesinger noted that "Kennedy was impressed by Khrushchev's vitality, his debating skill and his brutal candor, depressed by the blank wall of dogma." (Ibid., p. 375.)

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 377. Khrushchev recalled: "I was very glad Kennedy won the election, and I was generally pleased with our meeting in Vienna. Even though we came to no concrete agreement, I could tell that he was interested in finding a peaceful solution to world problems and in avoiding conflict with the Soviet Union. He was a reasonable man, and I think he knew that he wouldn't be justified in starting a war over Berlin." (Khrushchev, op. cit., p. 458.)

(3) *The balance of power: A predominating concept and non-negotiable conflicting perceptions*

At issue in the Vienna negotiations, as in the subsequent Berlin and Cuban missile crises, was the balance of power. For both Khrushchev and Kennedy this was an all-pervading concept central to determining the course of Soviet-American relations and the ultimate success or failure of their nations in international politics.

Each interpreted the concept differently, inevitably making it non-negotiable; the consequence was conflict and crisis.

Khrushchev's belief in the shift in the balance of power and its impact upon the conduct of Soviet policy has been explained above. Suffice it to say that in 1961 he gave additional dramatic emphasis to the concept, particularly in his January 6, 1961, speech (which had a profound impact on Kennedy and the new administration) and during the Berlin crisis. The essence of Khrushchev's foreign policy position was in effect that the United States and its allies had to accept this changing power relationship and shape their foreign policies accordingly.¹¹⁴

As an historian and member of that generation much influenced by the consequences of appeasement in the 1930's, President Kennedy accepted the balance of power theory as a valid and realistic concept in international relations. His behavior during the crises in Berlin and Cuba and his perception of that of the Soviet leadership was greatly influenced by this belief. Downgrading ideology, Kennedy tended to view international conflict more in national than in ideological terms.¹¹⁵ For him, national interest was the primary motivating force, not ideological abstractions.

Thus, at Vienna, Kennedy tried hard to reach an accommodation with Khrushchev that would satisfy the vital national interests of each nation. The key element in his negotiating position was a mutual acceptance of the existing equilibrium of power and thus a common perception of the status quo. Kennedy accepted social change as part of the normal historical process, but essentially peaceful change and change that did not involve the prestige or commitments of the Soviet Union and the United States or upset the balance of world power. He recognized the status quo as acceptance of the existing balance of international force, but far from advocating a freeze on the social mold of the world, he believed in political and institutional change as both inevitable and desirable. What Kennedy hoped for was a process of change that would not entail the transfer of power from one bloc to the other and would not make either side feel threatened and therefore obliged to resist change by force.¹¹⁶

Khrushchev rejected Kennedy's perception of the balance of power concept, arguing the thesis set forth in his January 6 speech; namely, that social revolution, as a global phenomenon, was preordained by history; that such revolutions, that is, "wars of national liberation," were "sacred"; and that the Soviet Union had an obligation to assist them whenever possible. For Khrushchev, the status quo meant the

¹¹⁴ Whelan, Joseph G. "Khrushchev's Speech of Jan. 6, 1961: A Summary and Interpretive Analysis." U.S. Congress, Senate. Prepared at the request of Senator Alexander Wiley. 87th Cong., 1st sess. Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961. 9 pp.

¹¹⁵ Schlesinger, Thousand Days, pp. 298-299.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 363 and 366.

continued process of the conquest of power by Communist revolution on a global scale. Kennedy's conception of a global standstill was in his view an attempt to alter the status quo, not support it; it was an attempt to arrest the revolutionary process.¹¹⁷

Thus the conflicting perceptions of the balance of power concept and its implications for the status quo became entangled in Soviet-American relations, dangerously so because it meant that Soviet support for global revolutions (for example, Castro's revolution in Cuba) and refusal to recognize an acceptable balance of power (for example, in Berlin and thus Europe) would expose the great powers to the very miscalculations and confrontations that Kennedy sought to avoid. Out of this essentially ideological conflict of world views emerged the dynamic forces that produced the crisis in Berlin, and 1 year later, the Cuban missile crisis.¹¹⁸

(c) *Deepening of Soviet interests and commitments in Cuba, 1960-62*

Soviet interests and commitments in Cuba deepened progressively during the years from Castro's assumption of power in 1959 through 1962. Examination of the period prior to the missile crisis suggested three major trends:¹¹⁹

(1) The shift by Cuba from its political alignment with the American states to a closer association with the Communist bloc as the Castro regime adopted the Communist apparatus, took on more and more the coloration of a Communist regime, and openly declared its linkage with the world of Marxism-Leninism.

(2) The gradual expansion of Soviet commitments to Cuba in the form of political support, economic aid, and supplies of military weapons. Vigorous Soviet political support was forthcoming after diplomatic recognition in May 1960, followed by a progressive increase in economic and military aid (U.S. estimates of military aid in March 1962, \$100 million) and a pledge of support against the United States in the aftermath of the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961.

(3) Khrushchev's attempt to intimidate the United States and discredit its traditions and leadership position in the Western Hemisphere as a whole. On July 9, 1960, Khrushchev threatened to rocket the United States if it intervened militarily in Cuba, a threat he qualified then and later as being "figuratively speaking" and "symbolic." Three days later, he contended that the Monroe

¹¹⁷ When reminiscing about Vienna 3 years later, Khrushchev complained to Senator William Benton that Kennedy had "bypassed" the real problem. "We, in the U.S.S.R.," he said, "feel that the revolutionary process should have the right to exist." The question of "the right to rebel, and the Soviet right to help combat reactionary governments . . . is the question of questions. . . . This question is at the heart of our relations with you. . . . Kennedy could not understand this." But Schlesinger argued that Kennedy understood it "well enough" after Khrushchev's January 6 speech and understood it "very well indeed" after the first day in Vienna. "Khrushchev's response left no doubt about the joker in the Soviet doctrine of coexistence: The idea of a dynamic status quo meant simply that the democracies had no right to intervene in the Communist world, while the Communists had every right to intervene in the democratic world." (*Ibid.*, p. 366.) For Khrushchev's explanation of the balance of power concept and status quo, see Khrushchev, *Nikita S. Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*. Boston, Little, Brown, 1974, pp. 495-496.

¹¹⁸ In the case of Berlin, it meant that Kennedy would not accept Khrushchev's unilateral action as an attempt to radically alter the balance of power in Europe. As Schlesinger put it in explaining Kennedy's view, "If the United States surrendered to the Soviet demand, it would not be regarded as a serious country any longer." (*Ibid.*, p. 372.)

¹¹⁹ Whelan, Joseph G. *The Soviet-American Crisis in Cuba: A Brief Survey*. Legislative Reference Service, Library of Congress, Washington, Mar. 27, 1963, 44 pages.

Doctrine was dead—it "has outlived its time, has outlived itself, has died, so to say, a natural death. Now the remains of this doctrine should best be buried as every dead body is so that it should not poison the air by its decay. That would be the correct thing to do and this is what will happen apparently." Again he pledged support for Cuba in any "aggressive action" the United States takes against it. Such declarations intended to discredit the United States and lend support to Cuba continued through 1962.

(d) *Vigorous American counterthrusts*

The United States responded to the Soviet Union's aggressive policy in Cuba with vigorous counterthrusts and openly declared opposition. For what was at stake in Cuba was a vital national interest.

U.S. policies in the Western Hemisphere have been rooted in historic national traditions. Since the beginning of the Republic, Cuba had a special place in American thought. At the time of the Republic's founding, American leaders firmly established the national policy that Cuba, then a Spanish possession, could not be transferred to any other foreign power. The purpose of this principle was the need to protect vital political and strategic interests. This "no-transfer" principle, as it came to be called, was, in effect, incorporated into the Monroe Doctrine and in innumerable declarations was, therefore, reaffirmed as a cardinal principle of American diplomacy. Cuba, either under Spain or independent, was regarded as a vital national interest to be protected even at the cost of war. In pursuit of larger historic hemispheric interests, Cuba came to hold one of the highest places in the hierarchy of American foreign policy values. For Americans, Cuba was not far removed in a geographical, intellectual or an emotional sense from the vital center of their national interest; namely, preservation of the Republic itself.

To grasp this essential truth is the beginning of understanding why the United States was prepared to face nuclear war in order to remove the Soviet threat from Cuba, for the threat to this vital interest was not Castro but rather the Soviet Union which used Castro's Cuba to achieve larger and more aggressively directed political purposes. Failure of Khrushchev and others in the Soviet leadership to understand the deeper meaning of Cuba for the United States led them to a grave miscalculation.

American policy toward Cuba during the Eisenhower-Kennedy years—1959 through 1962—could be summed up as follows:¹²⁰

- (1) At first, to encourage genuine democracy in Cuba when the Castro government came to power;
- (2) Later, to exercise restraint and maintain a "hands off" policy; that is, not to intervene directly but to seek Cuba's isolation;
- (3) To build up political and economic counterpressures as Castro turned away from the Western Hemisphere and became more closely aligned with the Soviet bloc;
- (4) Through declarations to insist upon Soviet respect for traditional American policy in this hemisphere (that is, the Monroe Doctrine);

¹²⁰ Ibid., pp. 1, 21-25.

(5) Kennedy's addition on April 20, 1961, in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion, to resort to unilateral action if other nations of the Hemisphere failed to respond to external Communist penetration (Kennedy said in his 1961 State of the Union Message, " * * * Communist domination in this hemisphere can never be negotiated") ; and another Kennedy addition on September 13, 1962, as the tempo of the missile crisis quickened ; and

(6) To act swiftly against Cuba if U.S. security were seriously endangered.

American policy thus appeared to become progressively more firm and forthright as the Soviet threat in Cuba became more clearly evident.

2. PRELUDE TO THE CRISIS

(a) *On a collision course in August-September 1962*

(1) *Khrushchev's decision and motivations*

By August-September, 1962, the Soviet Union and the United States were clearly on a collision course. Sources conflict on the time when the decision was made to send in the missiles to Cuba. But Khrushchev himself recalled that the idea came to him during a state visit to Bulgaria during May 14-19, 1962. After "brooding over what to do", he conferred with others in the Soviet leadership upon returning to Moscow, and after discussions, as he wrote, "we decided to install intermediate-range missiles, launching equipment, and Il-28 bombers in Cuba."¹²¹ In an account striking for its candor with respect to the decision and the motivations behind it, Khrushchev explained :

It was during my visit to Bulgaria that I had the idea of installing missiles with nuclear warheads in Cuba without letting the United States find out they were there until it was too late to do anything about them. I knew that first we'd have to talk to Castro and explain our strategy to him in order to get the agreement of the Cuban Government. My thinking went like this: If we installed the missiles secretly and then if the United States discovered the missiles were there after they were already poised and ready to strike, the Americans would think twice before trying to liquidate our installations by military means. I knew that the United States could knock out some of our installations, but not all of them. If a quarter or even a tenth of our missiles survived—even if only one or two big ones were left—we could still hit New York, and there wouldn't be much of New York left. I don't mean to say that everyone in New York would be killed—not everyone, of course, but an awful lot of people would be wiped out. I don't know how many: That's a matter for our scientists and military personnel to work out. They specialize in nuclear warfare and know how to calculate the consequences of a missile strike against a city the size of New York. But that's all beside the point. The main thing was that the installation of our missiles in Cuba would, I thought, restrain the United States from precipitous military action against Castro's Government. In addition to protecting Cuba, our missiles would have equalized what the West likes to call "the balance of power."¹²²

(2) *Estimate of Khrushchev's motivations in the West*

(a) *Radically change strategic and political balance of power.*—Western observers attributed a single motivation to Khrushchev in instigating the missile crisis: To radically change the strategic and political balance of power in the world. By this bold move, it was reasoned, Khrushchev could go far to redress the balance of nuclear power

¹²¹ Khrushchev, op. cit., p. 495.

¹²² Ibid., pp. 493-495.

then tipped decidedly in favor of the United States. A minimum of 64 medium-range (around 1,000 miles) and intermediate-range (1,500-2,000 miles) nuclear missiles appeared to have been contemplated for Cuba. Twenty-four medium-range and 16 intermediate-range launching pads were under construction. Thus the Soviet nuclear striking capability against targets in the United States would have been nearly doubled. Nonetheless, the United States would still have maintained at least a 2-to-1 superiority in nuclear power targeted against the Soviet Union, making the shift in the military balance of power less crucial than in the political.¹²³

The impact on the political balance was the most critical element in Khrushchev's motivations. According to the estimates of qualified scholars, his success in Cuba would have undermined U.S. credibility in international relations, weakened its power position in the world, and exposed a vulnerable United States to severe Soviet political pressures along a global front. As Schlesinger explained:

Every country in the world, watching so audacious an action 90 miles from the United States, would wonder whether it could ever thereafter trust Washington's resolution and protection. More particularly, the change in the nuclear equilibrium would permit Khrushchev, who had been dragging out the Berlin negotiation all year, to reopen that question—perhaps in a personal appearance before the United Nations General Assembly in November—with half the United States lying within range of nuclear missiles poised for delivery across the small stretch of water from Florida. It was a staggering project—staggering in its recklessness, staggering in its misconception of the American response, staggering in its rejection of the ground rules for coexistence among the superpowers which Kennedy had offered in Vienna.¹²⁴

(b) *Improve Soviet negotiating position.*—What Schlesinger was suggesting with respect to the impact of the crisis on the political balance was elaborated in detail by British Foreign Secretary Lord Hume in his defense of the U.S. action in Cuba against British critics. Lord Hume summed up Khrushchev's political motivation in the context of improving the Soviet Union's negotiating position:

Why was it done at this time? Mr. Khrushchev had been preparing for a meeting with President Kennedy on the major problems of East-West relations later in the year. But he does not wish to negotiate on equal terms with President Kennedy. What he wanted to do was to be able to confront the President with a change in the balance of nuclear power and thus to place the President at a political disadvantage. The Russian aim was to negotiate for victory over the whole field of these great problems, including Berlin. No doubt they calculated that, with every American city covered by nuclear weapons, Russia's chances of forcing concessions in substance would be greatly increased. It was a demonstration of brinksmanship with nuclear weapons to fray and test the nerves of the free world and in particular the United States. Fortunately, this plan was foiled by two things. First, by the discovery of the deception plan before the decisive shift in the balance of power could take place, and second, by the President's combination of resolution and restraint in restoring the balance.¹²⁵

(3) Influx of Soviet weapons and military technicians

In early July, Khrushchev conferred with Raoul Castro, Cuba's war minister and brother of its leader. And in late July and throughout August the shipment of military equipment along with technicians, in the words of The New York Times, "suddenly poured into the island."¹²⁶ In September, further Soviet-Cuban agreements were an-

¹²³ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 796.

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 796-797.

¹²⁵ United States in World Affairs, 1962, p. 96.

¹²⁶ The New York Times, Sept. 3, 1962, p. 1.

nounced on the supply of military weapons and the building of a fully equipped "fishing" port in Havana Bay, the latter arousing concern in the Defense Department for its military utility. Amid growing alarm in the country, the full extent of the Soviet buildup in Cuba known at that time was publicly disclosed by Under Secretary of State George W. Ball in testimony to the Congress on October 3.¹²⁷

(b) *Soviet program for "cover and deception"*

In what Roger Hilsman, Director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, called a program for "cover and deception," the Soviet maintained a public and diplomatic stance of innocence.¹²⁸ As the buildup continued apace, Soviet officials gave numerous assurances through a variety of channels of their peaceful intent and their purely "defensive" purposes in Cuba. Among them were the following:

- Early in September, Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin passed along Khrushchev's assurances to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, one of the key principals in the management of this crisis, and Sorensen on separate occasions that the equipment going into Cuba was "defensive in nature and did not represent any threat to the security of the United States."¹²⁹ Khrushchev gave further assurances to Robert Kennedy that he would do nothing to disrupt the Soviet-American relationship during the period prior to the coming election.
- In an official statement published on September 11, the Soviet Government stated that in light of the power of Soviet nuclear rockets there was "no need for the Soviet Union to shift its weapons for the repulsion of aggression, for a retaliatory blow, to any other country, for instance, Cuba."¹³⁰
- In early October, Khrushchev and Mikoyan told Gorgi Bolshakov, a public information official at the Soviet Embassy in Washington, that the Soviet weapons being sent to Cuba were "intended" only for defensive purposes and that only antiaircraft missiles that could not reach American targets were being sent. On his return Bolshakov diligently passed the word around Washington, and apparently to the President and the Attorney General via a personal message from Khrushchev.¹³¹
- On October 13, Dobrynin assured Chester Bowles, a high-ranking official in the administration, "convincingly and repeatedly," according to Hilsman, that there were no "offensive weapons" in Cuba. Bowles had pressed the Ambassador "very hard" on this matter.¹³²
- On October 16, Khrushchev gave the same assurances to Ambassador Foy Kohler in Moscow in the wake of a "storm of public suspicion," as Hilsman put it, over the agreement to build a fishing port in Cuba. Khrushchev explained that Soviet "purposes" there were wholly defensive.¹³³

¹²⁷ The Congressional Record, Oct. 6, 1962, p. A7357.

¹²⁸ Hilsman, Roger. To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy. Garden City, Doubleday, 1967, p. 165.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 165-166.

¹³¹ Ibid. and Kennedy, Robert F. Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis. New York, W. W. Norton, 1969, p. 27.

¹³² Hilsman, op. cit., p. 165.

¹³³ Ibid.

—And finally, as late as October 18, 2 days after the President had concrete evidence of the missiles' presence, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko personally assured Kennedy in a White House meeting that Soviet aid to Cuba "pursued solely the purpose of contributing to the defense capabilities of Cuba," that "training by Soviet specialists of Cuban nationals in handling of defensive armaments was by no means offensive," and that "if it were otherwise, the Soviet Government would never become involved in such assistance." On hearing this, the President called for and read to Gromyko public statements made in September warning the Soviets against placing missiles in Cuba.¹³¹

(c) *Growing American alarm*

Notwithstanding Soviet assurances of peaceful intent and assurances on the defensive nature of their military assistance, the administration, the Congress, the press, and the American people became increasingly alarmed as Soviet ships poured into Cuba military equipment (for example, surface-to-air SAM missiles with related gear and equipment necessary for installation and operation, according to Ball) and military specialists (4,500, again according to Ball).¹³² Contributing to this increased anxiety was the lingering thought in the West as a whole of renewed Soviet pressure on Berlin in concert with a provocation in Cuba.¹³³

Growing American alarm was reflected in published statements of the President and in actions by the Congress. On September 4, President Kennedy released a statement, intended to quiet fears in the Nation, in which he emphasized, among other things, the lack of evidence of any significant offensive Soviet weapons in Cuba. But, he added this warning for the Soviets, "Were it to be otherwise, the gravest issues would arise."¹³⁴ On September 7, Kennedy requested Congress for standby authority to call up 150,000 reserve troops to permit, as he said, "prompt and effective responses * * * to challenges * * * in any part of the free world."¹³⁵ On the same day Congress expressed its approval in a joint resolution that specifically authorized the use of these troops in Cuba if necessary. Other supportive congressional actions quickly followed, including a "fight if we must" resolution in the Senate (86-1) and the House (384-7) and an amendment to the reserve mobilization bill that called for defense of the Monroe Doctrine and intervention in Cuba if necessary.¹³⁶ On the 11th, the Soviets responded to Kennedy's warning of the 7th with an official statement declaring that a U.S. attack on Cuba would mean nuclear war.¹³⁷ Then on September 13, the President made his most sweeping statement of warning to the Soviets. In a major policy declaration in which he denied any intention of invading Cuba he said:

If at any time the Communist buildup in Cuba were to endanger or interfere with our security in any way, including our base in Guantanamo, our passage

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Watt, D. C. *Survey of International Affairs*, 1962. Issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. London, Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 46-48. and Whelan, *Soviet-American Crisis in Cuba*, pp. 12-13.

¹³³ The Soviets had intensified their political offensive against Berlin and were once again endangering allied communications along the Berlin corridors. (Stebbins, Richard P. *The United States in World Affairs*, 1962. Published for the Council on Foreign Relations. New York, Harper & Row, 1963, p. 42.)

¹³⁴ Hilsman, op. cit., p. 171.

¹³⁵ Whelan, *Soviet-American Crisis in Cuba*, p. 27.

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 28-29.

¹³⁷ Hilsman, op. cit., p. 171.

to the Panama Canal, our missile and space activities at Cape Canaveral, or the lives of American citizens in this country, or if Cuba ever attempt to export its aggressive purposes by force or the threat of force against any nation on this hemisphere, or become an offensive military base of significant capacity for the Soviet Union, then this country will do whatever must be done to protect its own security and that of its allies.¹⁴¹

Thus by the end of September and early October the stage was set for the Soviet-American confrontation in Cuba: The shuttle of Soviet cargo and passenger ships across the Atlantic continued apace; American air surveillance, though at times hampered by cloud cover, recorded in detail the ominous Soviet activities in Cuba; Soviet officials attempted to pacify American fears as a feeling of alarm spread throughout the country. In brief, a crisis of the first magnitude was in the making.

3. THIRTEEN CRITICAL DAYS OF CONFRONTATION, CRISIS, AND NEGOTIATIONS

(a) *Discovery of missiles; internal deliberations; decision*

Late on Monday, October 15, intelligence analysts confirmed the photographic evidence collected on the 14th by a U-2 reconnaissance plane after the lifting of a 5-day cloud cover that the Soviets were building in Cuba a medium-range missile base. In their judgment this base, when operational, would have the capability of delivering a nuclear warhead deep into the United States.¹⁴² On the following morning at 8:45, McGeorge Bundy, a White House national security adviser, broke the news to the President at breakfast. As Robert Kennedy wrote, "That was the beginning of the Cuban missile crisis. * * *"¹⁴³

Viewed strictly as a negotiating encounter, the missile crisis at this beginning phase had two distinctive characteristics: One was the internal deliberations on deciding what to do; the other was the necessity of secrecy.

First, the President called together a group of trusted advisers in the administration, soon to be known as the executive committee, presumably of the National Security Council—the press later dubbed it, "Excom." The committee included, among other high-ranking officials in the current and former administrations, the President, Vice President Lyndon Johnson, Secretary of State Rusk, Robert Kennedy, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, Director of CIA John McCone, Gen. Maxwell Taylor, and U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson.¹⁴⁴ The principal task of the committee was in essence to study the problem and to recommend options for its solution to the President. In the context of negotiations the group was essentially to prepare both the initial bargaining position and a strategy for managing the crisis and negotiating its solution. The central objective of American policy was to get the Soviet missiles and other offensive weapons out of Cuba.

The second characteristic evident throughout the crisis and particularly at this initial phase was, as Schlesinger noted, "the most exacting secrecy: Nothing could be worse than to alert the Russians before the United States had decided its own course."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 801 and Sorensen, op. cit., pp. 872-673.

¹⁴³ Kennedy, op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁴⁴ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 802.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 802.

Haste was essential in reaching a decision on how best to respond to Khrushchev's challenge. The missiles were expected to be operational within 10 days. As Schlesinger wrote, "The deadline defined the strategy," and the strategy was inevitably reduced to keeping the management of the crisis in American hands, without the immediate involvement of the United Nations, for example, or the Western Allies.¹⁴⁶

The executive committee deliberated intensely and continuously for the next 5 days. It examined the problem from every conceivable perspective: From the extremes of doing nothing and launching a full-scale invasion, to the intermediate alternative positions of applying varying forms of diplomatic pressures on Castro and Khrushchev, a naval blockade, and a "surgical strike" on the missile bases. Positions shifted variously in the course of debate. The President evinced a preference for the blockade. The Attorney General, mindful of the serious moral implications, opposed a military solution as a first step. By Thursday, October 18, the balance of decision favored the blockade; the final decision was taken on Saturday afternoon, October 20, to impose the blockade, or a quarantine as it was called, to avoid the serious international implications of the blockade. In a straw vote, 11 favored the blockade, 6 the strike.¹⁴⁷

As the first step on the American side in this negotiation by action, the blockade concept had many arguments in its favor: It provided a middle course between inaction and combat; it avoided war, preserved flexibility and gave Khrushchev time to reconsider his actions; it could be carried out within the framework of treaty arrangements with Latin America; it could be an instrument for applying steadily increasing pressures on the Soviet Union; it avoided the shock of a surprise attack that would hurt the United States abroad and could provoke a precipitous Soviet response; it provided a way for a Soviet retreat with dignity and without an unacceptable loss of prestige if it worked and retained the option of military action if it failed. "In short," Schlesinger explained, "the blockade, by enabling us to proceed one step at a time, gave us control over the future."¹⁴⁸

(b) The initial U.S. negotiating position: Kennedy's speech of October 22

(1) On the nature of the Soviet threat

The President's speech setting forth the U.S. negotiating position was drafted over the weekend by Sorenson, and after further discussion, much review and editing by the President and the Executive Committee, it was approved and ready for delivery on Monday evening, October 22.¹⁴⁹ Amid rumors of impending crisis (by this time secrecy was beginning to break down), and against a background of the continuing hasty buildup of Soviet missiles in Cuba, expanding American surveillance, and preparations for military action, the President addressed the Nation at 7 o'clock. In a speech lasting 18 minutes, he laid before the American people the full dimension of the Soviet threat in Cuba. In building his case for negotiations, the President disclosed the following information:

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 803.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 808. For other detailed accounts of the decision process, see, Kennedy, op. cit., pp. 31-50; Sorenson, op. cit., pp. 682-88; and Hillsman, op. cit., pp. 191-196, 198-206.

¹⁴⁸ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 806.

¹⁴⁹ Sorenson, op. cit., pp. 693-702.

- The United States had “unmistakable evidence” that within the past few weeks the Soviet Union was preparing “a series of offensive missile sites” in Cuba;
- The purpose of the bases “can be none other than to provide a nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere”;
- Several of the missile sites included medium-range ballistic missiles capable of carrying a nuclear warhead for more than 1,000 nautical miles and striking Washington, D.C., the Panama Canal, Cape Canaveral, Mexico City, or any other city in the southeastern part of the United States, in Central America, or in the Caribbean area;
- Additional sites not yet completed appeared to be designed for intermediate-range ballistic missiles capable of traveling twice that distance—“and thus capable of striking most of the major cities in the Western Hemisphere, ranging as far north as Hudson Bay, Canada, and as far south as Lima, Peru”;
- Jet bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons were “now being uncrated and assembled” in Cuba, while the necessary air bases were being prepared;
- This “urgent transformation” of Cuba into an “important strategic base” by the presence of these “large, long-range, and clearly offensive weapons of sudden mass destruction” constituted an “explicit threat to the peace and security of all the Americas in flagrant and deliberate defiance of the Rio Pact of 1947, the traditions of this Nation and hemisphere, the joint resolution of the 87th Congress, the Charter of the United Nations, and my own public warnings to the Soviets on September 4 and 13”;
- This action contradicted “repeated assurances” of Soviet spokesmen, including those given personally by Gromyko, both publicly and privately delivered, that the arms buildup in Cuba would retain its original defensive character and that the Soviet Union had neither the need nor desire to station strategic missiles on the territory of any other nation;
- “Neither the United States of America nor the world community of nations can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small”;
- Nuclear weapons were “so destructive” and missiles “so swift” that “any substantially increased possibility of their use or any sudden change in their deployment may well be regarded as a definite threat to peace”;
- The United States and the Soviet Union, recognizing this fact, deployed strategic nuclear weapons “with great care, never upsetting the precarious status quo which insured that these weapons would not be used in the absence of some vital challenge”;
- The “secret, swift, extraordinary buildup of Communist missiles in an area well known to have a special and historical relationship to the United States and the nations of the Western Hemisphere, in violation of Soviet assurances and in defiance of American and hemispheric policy—this sudden, clandestine decision to station strategic weapons for the first time outside of Soviet soil—is a deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which cannot be accepted by this country if our courage and our

commitments are ever to be trusted again, by either friend or foe"; and finally

—“Our unwavering objective, therefore, must be to prevent the use of these missiles against this or any other country and to secure their withdrawal or elimination from the Western Hemisphere.”

(2) *Proposals for resolving the crisis*

The President then explained the following seven initial steps that he directed to be taken which constituted the essence of his negotiating position:

(1) “To halt this offensive buildup, a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba” was established;

(2) Continued and increased close surveillance of Cuba and its military buildup was ordered and should these “offensive military preparations continue, thus increasing the threat to the hemisphere, further action will be justified”;

(3) Any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere would be regarded “as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union”;

(4) American military forces at Guantanamo were reinforced;

(5) The consultative organ of the Organization of American States (OAS) was being immediately called to consider the threat to the hemisphere security and invoke the Rio Treaty to support “all necessary actions”;

(6) The Security Council of the United Nations was being convened without delay “to take action against this latest Soviet threat to world peace” and to consider the American resolution calling for “prompt dismantling and withdrawal of all offensive weapons in Cuba” under United Nations supervision before the quarantine would be lifted; and

(7) A request to Khrushchev “to halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless and provocative threat to world peace and to stable relations” between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The President went on to make the following additional points:

- He urged the Soviet Union to abandon “this course of world domination” and join in an effort to end the arms race;
- He noted that the United States had “no wish to go to war with the Soviet Union” but desired to live in peace; and he warned that,
- “Any hostile move anywhere in the world against the safety and freedom of peoples to whom we are committed including, in particular, the brave people of West Berlin will be met by whatever action is needed.”

The President concluded with an appeal to the Cuban people reassuring them of American regard for their freedom. He warned the American people of the “difficult and dangerous effort on which we have set out,” not knowing where the course would lead and what sacrifices it would require. There would be “months in which many threats and denunciations will keep us aware of our dangers,” he said, and added: “But the greatest danger of all would be to do nothing.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Text of Broadcast, Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1962, Published for the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, Harper & Row, 1963, pp. 374-380.

(c) Soviet counteractions: Khrushchev's rejection

On the same day President Kennedy sent a long letter to Khrushchev with a copy of his speech appealing for rationality and restraint. The President emphasized that in their discussions and exchanges on Berlin and other international questions, he was "most concerned" about the possibility that the Soviet Government "would not correctly understand the will and determination of the United States in any given situation," since, as he said, "I have not assumed that you or any other sane man would, in this nuclear age, deliberately plunge the world into war which it is crystal clear no country could win and which could only result in catastrophic consequences to the whole world, including the aggressor."¹⁵¹

In a reply received on Tuesday the 23d, Khrushchev accused the President of threatening him and the Soviet Union with a blockade and declared that the Soviet Union would not observe it. "The actions of the U.S.A. with regard to Cuba," he said, "are outright banditry or, if you like, the folly of degenerate imperialism." Khrushchev accused the United States of pushing mankind "to the abyss of a world missile-nuclear war," and stated that captains of Soviet vessels bound for Cuba would be instructed not to obey the orders of American naval forces. And then he issued this warning: If any efforts were made to interfere with Soviet ships, "we would then be forced for our part to take the measures which we deem necessary and adequate in order to protect our rights. For this we have all that is necessary."¹⁵² A Soviet Government statement was issued on the same day defining Soviet policy.¹⁵³

(d) Critical days of negotiations: Confrontation and interaction

(1) Positions in conflict: On a collision course

The positions of the adversaries were thus clearly drawn. For the next few days, President Kennedy, who maintained tight control over the management of the crisis particularly in the confrontation of vessels along the quarantine line and in conducting reconnaissance flights over Cuba, pursued four general lines of action. To avoid a Soviet "spasm reaction" and allow a pause in the Soviet response, he ordered the quarantine to take effect on Wednesday, October 24.¹⁵⁴ (Later, he shortened the quarantine line, again to give the Soviets pause to think.) He pressed for and received the support of the OAS (before issuing the quarantine proclamation) and his NATO Allies. Through Ambassador Stevenson, he laid the American case before the Security Council of the United Nations, providing photographic evidence as dramatic proof of Soviet deception. At the same time he stepped up surveillance over Cuba and pushed forward American preparations for a military invasion to knock out the missiles should the initial phase, that of the quarantine, fail. Kennedy's main problem was one of cautious haste, to persuade or pressure Khrushchev into removing the missiles before they became operational. Once they

¹⁵¹ Kennedy, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁵³ For an analysis of this statement, see, Dinerstein, Herbert S. *The Making of a Missile Crisis: October 1962*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, pp. 217-219, and app. 2, pp. 263-267.

¹⁵⁴ Hilsman, op. cit., p. 213.

were operational, his only recourse. it was generally agreed among his advisers, would be military action with all the fearful consequences that might follow.

On his part Khrushchev, his deception having once been exposed, adopted delaying tactics in order to complete the construction of the missile sites, still hoping to present the United States with a fait accompli. He accepted with alacrity a proposal by British pacifist Bertrand Russell, highly critical of the United States, for a summit conference to end the crisis; it was rejected by Kennedy.¹⁵⁵

In the United Nations, Khrushchev attempted to undermine the American position by accepting a formula proposed by Acting Secretary General U Thant that would momentarily ease the crisis by suspending both the shipment of arms and the quarantine during direct negotiations. But this proposal was unacceptable to the United States because it did not address the principal issue; namely, the removal of the offensive weapons from Cuba.¹⁵⁶ He also tried to intimidate the United States by issuing a threat through a visiting American business executive, William Kroix, president of Westinghouse International. Khrushchev warned that if the United States stopped Soviet ships, Soviet submarines (6 had joined the vessels heading for Cuba) would be forced to sink a U.S. ship and that would bring on World War III.¹⁵⁷ And finally Khrushchev accelerated the last minute missile buildup in Cuba, the completion of which was crucial for the success of his plan. Photographs from low-flying Navy reconnaissance missions, buzzing the missile sites themselves, disclosed on Wednesday, the 24th, that work on the sites continued full speed and for the first time indicated the presence of Soviet ground forces with tactical nuclear weapons. Within 4 days all MRBM's would be operational.¹⁵⁸ Within a month or so all IRBM's would be operational.¹⁵⁹

In brief, the Soviet Union and the United States were on a collision course; decisions for action were reduced to the principals in Moscow and Washington; the possibilities for a settlement were to be first tested along the quarantine line in what took on the form of negotiations by action.

(2) Negotiations by action along the quarantine line

If there were to be a serious initial conflict (as in the historical parallel of reprovisioning Fort Sumter that immediately brought on the Civil War), it was expected to come along the quarantine line, the point of contact for American enforcement and Soviet acquiescence or resistance. Kennedy approached the problem of enforcement with the greatest circumspection. He allowed the widest berth in order to give himself plenty of room and the greatest flexibility for maneuver and the Soviets sufficient time to meditate on the consequences of their next move. He wanted a hedge against a spasmodic Soviet response or a response that would be irreversible.¹⁶⁰ Realizing the enormity of the risks, he maintained the tightest control over the entire proceed-

¹⁵⁵ Survey of International Affairs, 1962, pp. 63-64.

¹⁵⁶ Hillsman, op. cit., p. 214.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 214-215, 227.

¹⁵⁹ Sorensen, op. cit., p. 711.

¹⁶⁰ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 818.

ings, and in his "disable, don't sink" order he stressed the necessity of discretion and certainty before applying force.¹⁶¹

There would be no shooting, and Soviet ships were to be kept in view but none boarded until he issued instructions.¹⁶² Kennedy and his closest advisers were convinced that neither side wanted war over Cuba, but they understood the possibility, that either could take measures for reasons of "security" or "pride" or "face" that would require a similar response from the other side and for the same reasons that in turn could bring on a counterresponse and eventually escalate into war.¹⁶³

The moment of greatest peril occurred not long after the quarantine went into effect on Wednesday October 24 at 10 a.m. On the previous evening, Tuesday October 23, Robert Kennedy had conferred with Dobrynin at which time he asked if the Soviet ships were going on to Cuba. An "extremely concerned" Dobrynin, as Kennedy described him, replied that these were their instructions, and he knew of no changes.¹⁶⁴

Meanwhile, on Wednesday the 24th a convoy of Soviet ships approached within 500 miles of the quarantine line. At 10 a.m., the *Gagarin* and the *Komiles* were within a few miles of it; a Soviet submarine had positioned itself between them. The aircraft carrier *Essex*, supported by helicopters and carrying antisubmarine equipment, was ordered to signal the submarine to surface and identify itself. If it refused, depth charges with a small explosive would be used to force it to surface. According to Robert Kennedy, "these few minutes were the time of gravest concern for the President."¹⁶⁵

The showdown, the time of final decision, had come.

But this crisis within a crisis dissolved, at least momentarily, when CIA Director McCone reported at 10:25 a.m. that some of the ships stopped dead in the water. Later, the Office of Naval Intelligence reported that 20 Soviet ships closest to the line had stopped, were dead in the water or had turned around. Immediately, the President ordered that these ships were not to be interfered with and that every opportunity should be given for them to turn around.¹⁶⁶ By Thursday and Friday, the 25th and 26th, 16 of the ships, including 5 with large hatches suspected of carrying missile equipment, had turned around and were heading back toward the Soviet Union, accompanied by American planes.¹⁶⁷

In subsequent encounters at sea, ships continued to be carefully screened. On Thursday, October 25, the Soviet oil tanker *Burkhardt* was allowed to pass because there was little likelihood that it was carrying missiles or other armaments covered under the quarantine order.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶¹ The proclamation stressed that "force shall not be used except in case of failure or refusal to comply with directions *** after reasonable efforts have been made to communicate them to the vessel or craft, or in case of self-defense. In any case force shall be used only to the extent necessary." (Sorensen, op. cit., p. 708.) See also Hilsman, op. cit., p. 213.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 215.

¹⁶³ Kennedy, op. cit., p. 62.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 71-72.

¹⁶⁷ Sorensen, op. cit., pp. 710-711. The sources are inconsistent on the actual number of ships. Sorensen mentioned 16 of the 18 ships, Kennedy 20, and Hilsman 12.

¹⁶⁸ Kennedy, op. cit., p. 73.

Similarly, an East German passenger ship, carrying 1,500 passengers, was permitted to continue on its voyage to Cuba.¹⁶⁹ The only ship actually boarded and inspected was the *Marcula*, on Friday, October 26. This vessel was an American built Liberty ship, Panamanian owned, registered from Lebanon, and bound for Cuba under a Soviet charter. Found to be carrying only trucks and truck parts by an unarmed boarding party, the freighter was permitted to pass through.¹⁷⁰

Management of these encounters at sea were a significant element in the larger on-going negotiations during the crisis. By ordering the return of the ships, Khrushchev had clearly indicated his desire to avoid a collision, keep the crisis contained, and permit negotiations to go forward on another level. It also served the purposes of his delaying tactics. In explaining the Soviet side quite at variance with the American view, Khrushchev wrote:

Our ships, with the remainder of our deliveries to Cuba, headed straight through an armada of the American Navy, but the Americans didn't try to stop our ships or even check them. We kept in mind that as long as the United States limited itself to threatening gestures and didn't actually touch us, we could afford to pretend to ignore the harassment. After all, the United States had no moral or legal quarrel with us.¹⁷¹

(e) *Denouement: Agreement and resolution of the crisis*

(1) *Fomin-Scali unofficial negotiations, Friday afternoon and evening, October 26*

(a) *Peaking of the crisis.*—Direct bilateral negotiations between Kennedy and Khrushchev reached a climatic turn on the evening of Friday, October 26. They were preceded, however, by the unofficial Fomin-Scali meeting in which Khrushchev used the informal channel of the news media to probe the American negotiating position.

Since Monday, October 22, there had been almost daily communications between the two leaders. On Thursday, October 25, the President responded to Khrushchev's sharply critical letter on the quarantine received on the 23d, again emphasizing what were by then familiar U.S. terms for resolving the crisis.¹⁷² By Friday October 26, time was growing short and tensions began to peak as the sense of crisis mounted and as the small circle of Kennedy advisers awaited Khrushchev's response to the letter of the 25th. Preparations were going forward for the American military invasion and occupation of Cuba. Simultaneously, work on making the Soviet missile sites operational was continuing full speed. A White House announcement on these activities concluded that the Russians were trying to achieve "full operational capability as soon as possible." As Hilsman, a principal at this point in the crisis, observed, "no one on the American side could forget the consequences once all 40 launching pads were operational."¹⁷³ And as President Kennedy told his advisers at a meeting on Friday morning:

We are going to have to face the fact that, if we do invade, by the time we get to these sites, after a very bloody fight, they will be pointed at us. And we must further accept the possibility that when military hostilities first begin, those missiles will be fired.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 82 and Sorensen, op. cit., p. 710.

¹⁷¹ Khrushchev, op. cit., p. 494.

¹⁷² Kennedy, op. cit., pp. 79-81.

¹⁷³ Hilsman, op. cit., p. 216.

¹⁷⁴ Kennedy, op. cit., p. 85. See also, Schlesinger, op. cit., pp. 824-825.

(b) *Meeting at the Occidental Restaurant.*—Against this background of rising tensions and stress, John Scali, the State Department correspondent for the American Broadcasting Co., known to be trusted as an accurate and reliable reporter by the highest level of the U.S. Government, received an urgent telephone call at 1:35 on Friday afternoon from Aleksander Fomin, a counselor at the Soviet Embassy, asking for an immediate meeting. On previous occasions Scali had lunched with Fomin but never on such short notice and under such alarming circumstances. For Scali the sense of urgency was important but of greatest importance was the fact that Fomin was known to be the senior Soviet intelligence officer in the United States with his own direct communication lines to the Soviet leadership.¹⁷⁵

The meeting took place at the Occidental Restaurant. The usually stolid, phlegmatic Fomin now haggard and alarmed said to Scali, "War seems about to break out. Something must be done to save the situation." Scali replied that the Soviet leadership should have thought of that before sending the missiles to Cuba. "There might be a way out," Fomin said after a moment of silence, and then he made a proposal in the form of questions that contained the following elements:

(1) The Soviets would promise to remove the missiles under United Nations inspection.

(2) Khrushchev would promise never to introduce such offensive weapons into Cuba again.

(3) In return, President Kennedy would promise publicly not to invade Cuba.

Fomin added that if Ambassador Stevenson pursued this approach in the United Nations, where U Thant was attempting to mediate the crisis, Soviet Ambassador V. A. Zorin would be interested.¹⁷⁶

Scali did not know how the administration would respond to these proposals, but Fomin begged him to find out immediately from his friends in the State Department. Writing down his home telephone number and instructing Scali to call him night or day, Fomin declared: "If I'm not at the Embassy, call me here. This is of vital importance."¹⁷⁷

Scali took Khrushchev's proposal immediately to the State Department where after discussion with the Executive Committee, Secretary Rusk authorized Scali to tell Fomin that the administration saw "real possibilities" for a negotiation. But the Soviet authorities had to understand, he said, that time was short—no more than 48 hours.¹⁷⁸

(c) *Meeting at the Statler Hilton's coffee shop.*—At 7:30 in the evening, Scali met again with Fomin, this time at the Statler Hilton's coffee shop, and there over coffee passed along the administration's response. Fomin, apparently skeptical as to whether this response represented official views of the U.S. Government, several times asked if the information came from high administration sources. Scali replied that it came from very high sources.¹⁷⁹

Satisfied on this point, Fomin introduced a new element in the Khrushchev proposal: Since inspection of Cuban bases was to take place, why shouldn't a similar inspection be made of American bases

¹⁷⁵ Hillsman, op. cit., p. 217.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., and Schlesinger, op. cit., pp. 825-826.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 826.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. and Hillsman, op. cit., p. 218.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

in Florida, the staging area of a possible invasion of Cuba? Scali countered that this was a new element in the negotiations on which he had no information as to how the administration might react. Speaking as a reporter, however, he explained that this new element would raise, in Hilsman's words, a "terrible complication." The situations were not symmetrical, he said, since no American missiles were directed at Cuba, and he believed that President Kennedy would reject any such proposal. Scali reemphasized the matter of urgency impressed upon him by Rusk—"time is very urgent." Rusk had said. Haggling over the new proposal would consume valuable time and consequent delays might bring on a disaster for Cuba, the Soviet Union and the world.¹⁸⁰

At this Fomin thanked Scali, repeated his assurance that the information would be relayed to the very highest levels in the Kremlin and simultaneously to Zorin at the United Nations, and departed in such obvious haste that he threw down a \$5 bill for a 30-cent check.¹⁸¹

(2) Khrushchev's letter of concession, evening of October 26

During the evening of October 26, Khrushchev's response to the President's letter of the 25th arrived in the form of a four-part cable. Contrary to press reports at the time, this letter, still classified, was not hysterical and incoherent but rather, as Robert Kennedy described it, "very long and emotional," and "the emotion was directed at the death, destruction, and anarchy that nuclear war would bring to his people and all mankind. That, he said again and again and in many different ways, must be avoided."¹⁸²

In the letter Khrushchev made this proposal, as Kennedy paraphrased it: "No more weapons to Cuba and those within Cuba withdrawn or destroyed, and you reciprocate by withdrawing your blockade and also agree not to invade Cuba."¹⁸³

At a meeting held late at night, the letter was examined and re-examined by the President's inner circle of crisis managers. For it was, as Sorensen noted, "a bit vague."¹⁸⁴ Finally, it was turned over to the State Department for study and a report on the following day.¹⁸⁵ Robert Kennedy, who had "a slight feeling of optimism," felt that the letter for all its rhetoric "had the beginnings perhaps of some accommodation, some agreement." This feeling was strengthened by subsequent reports of the Fomin-Scali meetings.¹⁸⁶

After careful study, the State Department, taking into consideration the Soviet-American pledge to U Thant to avoid confrontation along the quarantine line, the unofficial proposals to Scali, and Khrushchev's letter, judged—with some qualifications—that from all the evidence, Khrushchev was sincerely seeking a way out of the crisis.¹⁸⁷

Thus by the end of the week, the Soviet negotiating position was reduced to three essential points: A promise to remove the missiles under United Nations inspection, a promise never to reintroduce such offensive weapons, in return for an American promise to lift the quarantine and not to invade Cuba.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 218-219.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 219.

¹⁸² Kennedy, op. cit., p. 86.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁸⁴ Sorensen, op. cit., p. 712.

¹⁸⁵ Kennedy, op. cit., p. 90.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Hilsman, op. cit., p. 220.

(3) *Khrushchev's apparent retraction, Saturday morning, October 27*

(a) *A precipitous downturn in the crisis.*—Hopes were running high as the Executive Committee convened at 10 o'clock on Saturday morning, October 27, to draft a reply to Khrushchev's letters. But such hopes were soon dimmed by a series of events that propelled the crisis to its most critical point.

At 10:17 details of a new note by Khrushchev, then being broadcast over Radio Moscow that radically altered his previous negotiating position, were coming in over the news ticker. His offer now was for a mutual trade-off: The Soviet Union would remove its missiles from Cuba and pledge not to invade Turkey, if the United States would remove its missiles from Turkey and pledge not to invade Cuba.¹⁸⁸

A report was also received that a single Soviet ship had detached itself from others rendezvousing outside the quarantine line and was heading for Cuba. Fear arose among the President's advisers that the Soviets were about to test American determination in a confrontation at sea.¹⁸⁹

Far graver news quickly followed. The SAM network of antiaircraft missiles had become operational. Proof had come with a report that a U-2 plane had been shot down and its pilot killed during a reconnaissance flight over Cuba. (Adding to the gravity, a U-2 plane had accidentally strayed into Soviet territory while on a routine air-sampling mission from an Alaskan base, causing Soviet fighters to scramble.)

Robert Kennedy called the loss of the U-2 over Cuba the beginning of "the most difficult 24 hours of the missile crisis."¹⁹⁰ Hilsman called it the "blackest hour" of the crisis.¹⁹¹ The crisis had now clearly entered its military phase, for it had been determined that when once the SAM sites became operational and could thus prevent U.S. reconnaissance flights, air strikes against them would become mandatory. The President expressed the problem succinctly. "How can we send any more U-2 pilots into this area tomorrow unless we take out all of the SAM sites? We are now in an entirely new ball game."¹⁹² The latest reconnaissance photographs not only showed a continued speed-up of construction on the missile sites but also the rapid construction of permanent and expensive installations of nuclear warhead storage bunkers and troop barracks.¹⁹³ Khrushchev's letter, it will be recalled, had already informed the President that all the missiles had been delivered¹⁹⁴ to Cuba. Khrushchev later recalled, "We had delivered almost everything by the time the crisis reached the boiling point."¹⁹⁵ Thus, American choices were being radically reduced to a single military option.

There was almost unanimous agreement among the President's close advisers to destroy the missile site early the next morning, that is, Sunday, with an attack by bombers and fighters. But the President, anxious to give the Soviets time to reflect upon the folly of their

¹⁸⁸ Kennedy, op. cit., p. 94 and Hilsman, op. cit., p. 220.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Kennedy, op. cit., p. 94.

¹⁹¹ Hilsman, op. cit., p. 220.

¹⁹² Kennedy, op. cit., p. 98.

¹⁹³ Sorensen, op. cit., p. 713.

¹⁹⁴ Kennedy, op. cit., p. 88.

¹⁹⁵ Khrushchev, op. cit., p. 495.

course and hesitant to set into motion a sequence of events that could easily slip out of control, bring on a nuclear war, and end with total destruction, decided to delay before attacking and give diplomacy another chance. As Robert Kennedy recalled: "We won't attack tomorrow, the President said. We shall try again."¹⁹⁶

(b) *Complicating issue of the Turkish missile bases.*—The issue of Turkish missile bases complicated negotiations in the Cuban crisis. The President was angry that his directive earlier in the year ordering the dismantling of these obsolete bases was not followed through and that the bases had now become, in Robert Kennedy's words, "hostages of the Soviet Union."¹⁹⁷

But negotiating this issue in the Cuban context was unacceptable. Offensive Soviet missiles in Cuba was the central issue, not obsolete U.S. missiles in Turkey. And the immediate threat was the rapid and continuing construction of these missile bases in Cuba. No negotiations could take place while that buildup continued. A statement to this effect, and suggesting as well that future negotiations on the Turkish bases offered no problem, was drafted as a response to the Soviet proposal and released as a public statement.¹⁹⁸

(c) *Resumption of the Fomin-Scali negotiations.*—At this point, having chosen the path of diplomacy, the crucial problem facing the President was to get the negotiations back on track, back where they were the night before—and quickly. On Saturday afternoon, Secretary Rusk called in Scali and suggested that he contact Fomin to find out what happened.¹⁹⁹ Concern had been expressed that the military may have taken over in Moscow which could explain the reversal of policy.²⁰⁰

The two unofficial negotiators met at 4:15 in a deserted banquet hall off the mezzanine of the Statler Hotel. A puzzled and unhappy Fomin tried to explain away the reversal of Khrushchev's negotiating position as a case of bad communications; namely, that the Saturday morning cable had been drafted before his report on the favorable American reaction had been received in Moscow.²⁰¹ A disbelieving Scali exploded, calling the unofficial exchange a "stinking double cross." He reemphasized the urgency of time and the President's determination to get the missiles out of Cuba. With respect to the proposal on the Turkish missile bases he declared that as a reporter well informed on official U.S. policy this proposal was, in Hilsman's account of the meeting, "completely, totally, and perpetually unacceptable." Negotiations on this problem, he said, had to take place in the framework of disarmament, not injected into the Cuban crisis.²⁰²

At this juncture the two unofficial negotiators parted: Fomin assured Scali that a clarifying reply from Moscow would be forthcoming; Scali repeated his warning about the urgency of time. Scali reported the outcome of this second encounter with Fomin directly

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 101. With respect to the problem of escalation, the President told his advisers: "It isn't the first step that concerns me, but both sides escalating to the fourth and fifth step—and we don't go to the sixth because there is no one around to do so. We must remind ourselves we are embarking on a very hazardous course." (p. 98.)

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁹⁸ Hilsman, op. cit., p. 222.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 828.

²⁰¹ That Fomin had a plausible argument with respect to bureaucratic complications in drafting a response to an earlier communication without knowledge of Khrushchev's personal letter of Friday was explained in Schlesinger, p. 829.

²⁰² Hilsman, op. cit., pp. 222-223.

and personally to the State Department and to the executive committee at the White House.²⁰³

(4) *Kennedy's response to Khrushchev, Saturday evening, October 27*

(a) *Accepting the letter of concession, ignoring the statement of reversal.*—Later in the afternoon, the executive committee met again in the Cabinet Room of the White House, this time to consider the State Department's draft reply to Khrushchev's latest letter. The scene was tense. Sharp disagreements arose over the draft among the President's advisers. By this time they were very tired, irritable, some already near exhaustion. As Robert Kennedy recalled: "All were weighted down with concern and worry."²⁰⁴

Controversy centered on the State Department draft that had addressed only the argument set forth in Khrushchev's letter: It rejected his trade-off proposal and maintained that the missiles could not be removed from Turkey. Robert Kennedy disagreed both with the content and tone of the draft. Supported by Sorensen, he suggested that the latest letter of reversal be ignored—Schlesinger referred to this as "a thought of breathtaking simplicity and ingenuity"—and a response be directed only to the Friday letter of concession as refined by the Fomin-Scali negotiations with respect to the removal of the missiles and United Nations inspection and verification in return for a U.S. noninvasion pledge.²⁰⁵

At a point of breakdown in the discussion—"we almost seemed unable to communicate with one another," Robert Kennedy noted—the President suggested, with a note of exasperation, that since the Attorney General and Sorensen felt so strongly about the shortcomings of the State Department draft, then they should withdraw and come up with an alternative. This was done and within 45 minutes they prepared a draft and presented it to the President and the Executive Committee. After some alterations and refinement the draft was typed and signed.²⁰⁶

In brief, the President's letter of the 27th accepted the vaguely stated Khrushchev proposal of Friday the 26th and also, without directly referring to it, the formula conveyed in the Fomin-Scali unofficial negotiations. The response was carefully drawn and made the following essential points:

1. You would agree to remove these weapons systems from Cuba under appropriate United Nations observation and supervision; and undertake, with suitable safeguards, to halt the further introduction of such weapons systems into Cuba.

2. We, on our part, would agree—upon the establishment of adequate arrangements through the United Nations to insure the carrying out and continuation of these commitments—(a) to remove promptly the quarantine measures now in effect, and (b) to give assurances against an invasion of Cuba.

The President only alluded to Khrushchev's second letter, expressing a desire to reduce tensions and halt the arms race and a willingness to confer on a détente affecting NATO and the Warsaw Pact. But "the first ingredient," he emphasized, was "the cessation of work on missile sites in Cuba and measures to render such weapons inoperable, under effective international guarantees."²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 223.

²⁰⁴ Kennedy, op. cit., p. 102.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 102-103 and Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 828.

²⁰⁶ Sorensen, op. cit., pp. 714-715 and Kennedy, op. cit., p. 103.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 102-104.

The President, in the interests of speed and psychological impact, released the letter publicly as it was being transmitted to Moscow shortly after 8 p.m.²⁰⁸

(b) *Robert Kennedy's meeting with Dobrynin.*—As the letter to Khrushchev was being prepared for transmission, the President sat in the Oval Office with the Attorney General and reflected on the unfolding crisis. He talked about the miscalculations that lead to war; the importance of giving the Soviets every conceivable way out of the crisis and to a peaceful settlement that would neither diminish their national security nor humiliate them publicly; the awful consequences of a nuclear war, especially for the children and young people of the world who had yet to play a role in the destiny of their countries; the great tragedy of error and its consequences for the world, especially the young. Troubled by these possible consequences of error, the President decided that Robert Kennedy should see Ambassador Dobrynin and personally convey to him his great concern.²⁰⁹

Dobrynin and Kennedy met in the Attorney General's office at 7:45 p.m. Kennedy reviewed the American perception of the crisis, explaining particularly the effect of the Soviet SAM missiles shooting down U.S. reconnaissance planes, as in the case of the U-2, and the "very grave" consequences of an escalation of the conflict. Recalling Soviet deception in establishing the bases while privately and publicly proclaiming that this would never be done, Kennedy said bluntly that the United States "had to have a commitment by tomorrow that those bases would be removed." This was not "an ultimatum" but "a statement of fact." Kennedy wanted it understood that "if they did not remove those bases, we would remove them." The President had "great respect" for the Soviet Union and the courage of its people, but should the Soviet Union feel it necessary "to take retaliatory action," before that was over, "there would be not only dead Americans but dead Russians as well."

What offer was the United States making? Dobrynin asked. Whereupon, Kennedy explained the contents of the President's letter, indicating that no trade-off on the Cuban-Turkish bases could be made. But he noted that the President "had been anxious to remove those missiles from Turkey and Italy for a long period of time"; that he had "ordered their removal some time ago," and that "it was our judgment that within a short time after the crisis was over, those missiles would be gone." The President wanted peace, Kennedy said, and desired to move along the path of diplomacy and negotiations to resolve the problems of Europe, Southeast Asia, and arms control. But progress could only be made after the current crisis "was behind us."

Kennedy terminated the meeting with a warning that, "Time was running out. We had only a few hours—we needed an answer immediately from the Soviet Union * * * we must have it the next day."

Kennedy returned to the White House. Neither he nor the President was optimistic about the outcome. Preparations were underway for an invasion. But the President had not abandoned hope; such hope as there was rested with Khrushchev reversing his course within the next few hours. "It was a hope, not an expectation," Robert Kennedy re-

²⁰⁸ Sorensen, op. cit., p. 714.

²⁰⁹ Kennedy, op. cit., pp. 105-106.

called. "The expectation was a military confrontation by Tuesday and possibly tomorrow * * *." ²¹⁰

(5) Resolution of the crisis, Sunday morning, October 28

The crisis was quickly resolved. Just before 9 o'clock on Sunday morning, October 28, Khrushchev's reply to the President's latest letter was broadcast over Radio Moscow. By the fifth sentence, it was clear that he had indeed conceded. Construction of the missile sites would stop; the weapons "which you described as offensive" would be crated and returned to the Soviet Union; negotiations to tie up the loose ends would begin at the United Nations. Looking to the future, Khrushchev said: "We should like to continue the exchange of views on the prohibition of atomic and thermonuclear weapons, general disarmament, and other problems relating to the relaxation of international tension." In brief, a statement of intention to negotiate.²¹¹

A White House statement was quickly drafted confirming the agreement and broadcast over Voice of America. A more complete reply to Khrushchev's letter was then prepared and released for publication and broadcast.²¹²

The crisis was all over, and, as Schlesinger observed, "barely in time." If Khrushchev's response had not come that Sunday and if work had continued on the missile bases, the United States, as Schlesinger concluded, "would have had no real choice but to take action against Cuba the next week." What lay beyond this initial military action no one could say with certainty. But the President, who Schlesinger believed, "saw more penetratingly into the mists and terrors of the future than anyone else," said a few weeks later: "If we had invaded Cuba * * * I am sure the Soviets would have acted. They would have to, just as we would have to. I think there are certain compulsions on any major power."²¹³

4. RESULTS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MISSILE CRISIS

(a) As a negotiating experience

(1) Total diplomacy

As a negotiating experience, the missile crisis was an exercise in total diplomacy.

Five basic channels of communications exist for communications between the Soviet and United States Governments: By formal letter between heads of governments using embassy facilities; alternative sets of Soviet channels (for example, the KGB network) that bypass their embassy in Washington and are probably handled in special ways in Moscow; views exchanged formally and officially by notes or letters between officials of lesser stature than the heads of government; informal but still official exchanges, as in the case of oral exchanges between the ambassador and an official in the White House or State

²¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 107-108.

²¹¹ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 830 and Hilsman, op. cit., p. 224.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 830. In an essay on "History and Diplomacy as Viewed by a Historian," Dr. Raymond J. Sontag, the distinguished American diplomatic historian, well described the sequence of decisions that often leads to war. He wrote: " * * * the diplomatist knows from experience that the decision for war is unlikely to come out of a clear sky; it is far more likely to be the last of a series of decisions, none of which is intended to precipitate war, each of which makes war more difficult to avoid, until at the end there remains no alternative except war. And negative as well as positive decisions can be links in the series." (In, Kertesz and Fitzsimons, op. cit., pp. 113-114.)

Department; and, finally, unofficial channels where a special Soviet officer with a nominal title as a working level official or Tass correspondent with exceptional connections might be used to advance a policy line, communicate a threat, try out a proposal or test a reaction in advance to avoid a premature commitment.²¹¹

In the missile crisis, all of these channels were used.²¹² Formal exchanges took place at the summit level between President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev. These were the most important, the most decisive. Less formal exchanges, less important but significant nonetheless, took place between Attorney General Kennedy and Ambassador Dobrynin. Several unofficial conversations took place, hints dropped by Tass correspondents at the United Nations, and conversations with semiofficial Soviet citizens, such as Georgi Bolshakov. The most important of the unofficial type were the negotiations between Fomin and Scali.

International and national institutions also played a significant political and diplomatic role in negotiating a resolution of this crisis. The United Nations became the center for internationalizing the crisis: Ambassador Stevenson's dramatic revelation of Soviet deception had an instant and electrifying effect on mobilizing international support (Moscow, for example, was denied the use of important African bases by its clients); Acting Secretary General U Thant proved to be a catalyst for reconciliation and an important agent for keeping the peace; and the United Nations itself was assigned a principal role in the Khrushchev-Kennedy bilateral agreement to resolve the crisis. Actions by the OAS were also an essential international ingredient in the negotiating process. And direct and continuing consultation with NATO added a substantial element of support to the administration's negotiating position.

On the national level, the Congress played a key role through the passage of supporting resolutions, authorizations for the use of additional military forces, and other formal legislative actions in mobilizing support of the Nation behind the administration. By such actions the Congress conveyed vital signals of intent to Moscow and accordingly provided an essential input into the resolution of the crisis. And the media on both sides were used to publicize each other's negotiating positions and garner national and international support as the negotiating process moved along. Finally, the military establishments were mobilized and their power orchestrated within the negotiating process during the management of the crisis. Raw power was ultimately the deciding factor in determining the outcome of this negotiating experience.

(2) Negotiations by action

(a) Miscalculation on both sides.—As a negotiating experience, the missile crisis was a unique illustration of what Ambassador Davies called, negotiations by action. Khrushchev made the first move by sending the missiles to Cuba. This was a miscalculation on both sides. Khrushchev miscalculated on two counts: The gravity of this action for U.S. vital national interests; and the magnitude of the U.S. response. The Kennedy administration also miscalculated as the result

²¹¹ Hillsman, op. cit., pp. 216-217.
²¹² Ibid.

of an intelligence failure. No one thought the Soviets would install such missiles in Cuba. The U.S. Intelligence Board made this official judgment on September 19, and only CIA Director McCone (who was on his honeymoon) believed, and then only fleetingly, that the Russians might be so emboldened as to do it.²¹⁶

(b) *Negotiating along the quarantine line.*—In this negotiations by action the U.S. countermove was to establish a quarantine line around Cuba and screen the inflow of shipping. The line established a critical point of contact for testing the will and resolve of both sides. President Kennedy took a very cautious approach and adopted a course of graduated response beginning at the lowest level of provocation. He wanted to give Khrushchev plenty of time to reflect on the consequences of breaking through the line. Accordingly, he redrew the line closer to Cuba, as the crisis proceeded, and initiated a policy of selective enforcement. There would be a careful screening of incoming traffic but no stopping or boarding of Soviet ships without his approval. Delicate naval maneuvers were devised in a mode of ascending pressures.

It was now Khrushchev's move. He faced a new set of conditions: He had to decide whether or not to test the American will. He decided against it and withdrew the approaching Soviet ships. Some ships returned to the Soviet Union; others were deployed in rendezvous well outside the quarantine line.

Negotiations by action along the quarantine line proved to be successful. The effect was to avert a serious confrontation at sea and divert attention momentarily to Cuba itself.

(c) *Negotiations by action in Cuba.*—Compelling the Soviets to remove their missiles from Cuba also took on many of the characteristics of a negotiation by action. Khrushchev's initial move was to virtually complete delivery of all the missiles, thus creating the problem for the United States. (In an apparent error of priorities or because of some unforeseen problem, work on the missile sites and SAM installations proceeded simultaneously, allowing the United States to observe progress from its U-2 flights. Such observations and the concrete evidence of deception gained from them would have been impossible had the first priority been given to completing the SAM sites. With this protective screen, the Soviets could have completed the missile launching pads and thus presented the United States with a *fait accompli*.)²¹⁷

In a series of countermeasures, the President took specific actions: He dispatched the reconnaissance flights, alerted the missile forces, and prepared for air strikes against the SAM sites as a first contingency and then, if necessary, a military invasion of Cuba. Such moves left Khrushchev with a single choice, between war or peace. But at the last minute Kennedy, moving from the level of negotiations by action to that of negotiations by the written word, gave Khrushchev a chance to reverse course and, in the words of his conceding letter, to loosen the "knot of war" and "take measures to untie that knot."²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 798. In recalling a conversation with the President as the crisis unfolded, Schlesinger wrote: "It was strange, he said, how no one in the intelligence community had anticipated the Soviet attempt to transform Cuba into a nuclear base; everyone had assumed that the Russians would not be so stupid as to offer us this pretext for intervention." (p. 811.) See also, Hilsman, op. cit., pp. 172 and 197.

²¹⁷ For a discussion of this matter, see, Hilsman, op. cit., pp. 182-183. For Khrushchev's explanation of the Soviet side, see, Khrushchev, op. cit., p. 495.

²¹⁸ Kennedy, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

(3) Negotiations through unofficial channels

Most extraordinary in the diplomacy of the missile crisis was the resort to negotiations through informal, unofficial channels. The Fomin-Scali negotiating encounters have no parallel in the history of Soviet-American relations, certainly with respect to the gravity of the negotiating environment. Viewed chronologically, their first encounter at the Occidental Restaurant on Friday afternoon, October 26 marked the first break in the crisis. Though unofficial in the strictest diplomatic sense, it nonetheless had the full authority of Chairman Khrushchev and the Kennedy administration.

But the risks were high.

Here again, as in Stalin's initiation of the Berlin blockade negotiations, Khrushchev resorted to the media as the initial channel of communications and negotiations, at best a dangerously tenuous connection subject to untold human error and external vagaries however successful the outcome. The crisis was fast reaching the "boiling point," as Khrushchev termed it. Time was of the essence, indeed a principal controlling factor in determining the final outcome. And yet the possibilities for miscalculation as the result, for example, of communications failures among others were infinite—witness the Khrushchev reversal letter. Thus, as in the analogous case of the Berlin blockade, the burden of war and peace in the nuclear age would seem to have been far too great to rely upon informal unofficial encounters in a restaurant, hotel coffee shop or hotel lobby.

(4) On secrecy and public disclosure

Absolute secrecy was another unique feature of the negotiations in the missile crisis. The principal actors on the American side tried as best they could to continue their official and private lives as normally as possible so as not to arouse public suspicion. Secrecy was imperative for the Americans from the time of discovery late Monday, October 15 to the President's speech of disclosure a week later on Monday, October 22. Over the weekend, secrecy began to break down, and the President was compelled to intervene personally to halt a New York Times story apparently disclosing essential elements of the impending crisis on grounds that publication might confront him with a Soviet ultimatum before he could get his own plans into effect.²¹⁹ During the week of negotiations, secrecy was maintained as the President's advisers planned both a negotiating and a confrontation strategy.

At the same time the administration used the technique of public disclosure to garner support for its negotiating position and to place the other side on the defensive and in the worst possible light. This was evident in the President's speech of October 22, Ambassador Stevenson's dramatic utterances and disclosures at the United Nations, and the immediate but selective publication of significant official statements and documents.

Soviet secrecy and disclosure followed along the same general lines, but in pursuit of Soviet purposes. For Khrushchev, secrecy was vital if he was to successfully present the President with a fait accompli in Cuba. And once negotiations got underway, secrecy was equally vital for both internal and external reasons as Khrushchev sought a way out of this dilemma. Like their counterparts in Washington, Khrush-

²¹⁹ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 800.

shchev and his close associates also tried to put on a calm face and affect a public behavior of serenity and business-as-usual during the crisis.²²⁰ At the same time the Soviet press and other media were used in full vigor to support the Soviet negotiating position and discredit that of the United States, for example, by the publication of extensive commentaries and analyses as well as official documents.²²¹

Thus the diplomacy of the missile crisis represents a classic case of secrecy in negotiations and the selective use of public disclosures in the negotiating process.

(5) President Kennedy as a negotiator

(a) *Some qualities of a successful negotiator.*—In managing the confrontation and conducting the negotiations in the missile crisis, President Kennedy demonstrated qualities that have long been regarded as essential for a successful negotiator: Wisdom to grasp the essentials of national interests from the perspective of both sides; a stern sense of resolution combined with flexibility; strong nerves and a moral toughness; an inner calmness and control over the details of the situation; the consultative capacity to draw upon available talent; a desire to reach an agreement; an understanding of the correlation between power and the negotiating process; a determination not to humiliate the adversary and drive him into a spasmodic response; and the necessity of saving the defeated adversary's sense of dignity by not gloating in victory and thus preparing the ground work for building a better relationship.

(b) *An appraisal.*—President Kennedy grasped both the essence and the full dimension of the problem to be negotiated and measured accurately the ratio of vital national security interests committed on both sides. Fundamental in his thinking was the belief that Soviet missiles in Cuba constituted a direct threat to the vital national security interests of the United States (vital in its true meaning as a direct threat to the Nation's security and political existence); it was not vital, however, to the security interests of the Soviet Union.²²²

Recognizing this difference in perceptions of the threat, the President was most careful not to humiliate the Soviet Union, not to disgrace Khrushchev, not to make him escalate responses to an irreversible point because Soviet national interests or security required it. Most of all he wanted to avoid pushing Khrushchev into a spasmodic response. President Kennedy put it succinctly: "We don't want to push him to a precipitous action—give him time to consider. I don't want to put him in a corner from which he cannot escape."²²³ Thus he managed the strategy of confrontation and negotiations in the crisis

²²⁰ Khrushchev recalled: "I remember a period of 6 or 7 days when the danger was particularly acute. Seeking to take the heat off the situation somehow, I suggested to the other members of the government: 'Comrades, let's go to the Bolshoi Theater this evening. Our own people as well as foreign eyes will notice, and perhaps it will calm them down. They'll say to themselves, "If Khrushchev and our other leaders are able to go to the opera at a time like this, then at least tonight we can sleep peacefully.'" We were trying to disguise our own anxiety, which was intense." (Khrushchev, op. cit., p. 497.)

²²¹ For an analysis of the Soviet press, see Dinerstein, op. cit., pp. 195-229 and appendix 1 and 2.

²²² Kennedy, op. cit., p. 126.

²²³ Ibid., p. 77. This approach was strongly urged upon the President through Schlesinger by Averell Harriman. "We must give him an out," Harriman said. "If we do this shrewdly, we can downgrade the tough group in the Soviet Union which persuaded him to do this. But if we deny him an out, then we will escalate this business into a nuclear war." (Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 821.) For a favorable appraisal of the President's handling of the crisis by Harriman, see Harriman, Russia and America, pp. 201-203.)

with disciplined restraint, flexibility and wisdom. At the same time the President understood the role of power and the correlation of power with changing requirements in the negotiating process.

The President also understood the Soviet obsession with security, and he demonstrated this in two ways: At least momentarily by avoiding a direct challenge, as would have been the case in boarding the Soviet ships along the quarantine line; and in the final resolution of the crisis by settling on a formula for inspection by air that had the virtue of avoiding direct onsite American verification. That he rightly understood the Soviet mentality and sensitivity on this matter of security was later revealed by Khrushchev who recalled:

Our ships, with the remainder of our deliveries to Cuba, headed straight through an armada of the American Navy, but the Americans didn't try to stop our ships or even check them. We kept in mind that as long as the United States limited itself to threatening gestures and didn't actually touch us, we could afford to pretend to ignore the harassment.

* * * * *

I won't deny that we were obliged to make some big concessions in the interests of peace. We even consented to the inspection of our ships—but only from the air. We never let the Americans actually set foot on our decks, though we did let them satisfy themselves that we were really removing our missiles.²²⁴

That President Kennedy maintained direct and absolute control over the most detailed execution of the strategy of confrontation and negotiation was another distinctive characteristic of this encounter. He personally ordered the reconnaissance flights, for example, and managed in the finest detail the program of graduated pressures along the quarantine line. Burned by the debacle at the Bay of Pigs, the President was not disposed again to let such vital matters get out of his control and create situations that might not be retrievable through negotiations.

And finally, the President maintained a disciplined restraint and calmness not only during the heat of the crisis but also in the hour of victory. The supporting staff which shared this moment of glory and personal satisfaction was sternly warned against any verbal posturing that would degrade the Soviet Union, injure its pride or discredit its leader. Kennedy, concerned about any potential backlash, preferred to begin building the relationship on a basis of trust and on an understanding of the limits and equilibrium of power. As he said later: "Every setback has the seeds of its own reprisal, if the country is powerful enough."²²⁵

²²⁴ Khrushchev, op. cit., pp. 496 and 499. The first quotation, at variance with the American view, related to the approach of Soviet ships to the quarantine line early in the crisis; the second related to the final agreement that required inspection and verification.

For a commentary on the connection between the Soviet inclination to conceal weakness and President Kennedy's admission of the missiles in Cuba, see Dinerstein, op. cit., p. 223. Dinerstein wrote: "It had been Soviet practice since the state was first established to conceal from its own people and from foreigners any evidence of weakness. Most Soviet security measures were directed to that end; Soviet opposition to international inspection in an arms control program derived from the fear that inspection would reveal weakness." The Soviets never protested the U-2 flights over the Soviet Union because of their demonstrated inability to stop them. When one was shot down (Gary Powers), they gave it maximum publicity because, as Dinerstein wrote, "now Khrushchev was displaying strength to his domestic and foreign opponents rather than revealing weakness." Thus he concluded, with respect to the missile crisis and Soviet behavior: "Very possibly the Soviet leaders projected their attitudes on to Kennedy and were therefore taken unawares when he publicly confirmed a dramatic shift in power away from the United States."

²²⁵ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 841.

(c) *A judgment at the time: Prime Minister Macmillan.*—Viewed in the context of a negotiation, the President's conduct revealed a high order of skill and understanding. British Prime Minister Macmillan (with whom Kennedy kept in the closest contact during the crisis) recorded in his diary on November 2, 1962 that the President had conducted this affair with "great skill, energy, resourcefulness and courage." According to Macmillan, "He answered the Communists with their own weapons—for they always use several and even divergent means to secure their ends." He played a "firm military game throughout—acting quickly and being ready to act as soon as mobilised." He played "the diplomatic card excellently" with respect to conferring with the European Allies. And he "played the United Nations admirably", exposing the Soviet "fatal mistake of bare-faced lying." Macmillan concluded: "Altogether the President did wonderfully well. * * *" ²²⁶

(6) *Khrushchev as a negotiator*

(a) *An American appraisal: Soviets handled crisis with "wisdom and restraint".*—Hilsman's appraisal of Khrushchev's role as a negotiator in this crisis seemed close to the mark. "Let it * * * be said that the decision to withdraw required courage on the Soviet side and that although putting the missiles into Cuba was threatening and irresponsible, the Soviets," he wrote, "handled the ensuing crisis with wisdom and restraint." ²²⁷

For Khrushchev there were three personal crises within this larger crisis. They were the critical points at which his decision would determine the American reaction. In all three he responded, as Hilsman said, "with wisdom and restraint."

In the negotiations by action along the quarantine line, Khrushchev withdrew Soviet ships, thus avoiding a showdown at sea with the U.S. Navy. At the negotiating front in Washington, he made the first break toward a negotiated settlement by directing Fomin to contact Scali on the afternoon of the 26th and by writing the long letter of concession to the President in the evening. And finally he reaffirmed his initial decision by reversing a subsequent statement of unacceptable terms in his letter to the President on the 28th. By the 28th, it must be remembered, all the MRBM's were operational; ²²⁸ the protective screen of the SAM network was in whole or in part also operational, having already shot down one U-2; the IRBM's would have been operational by December. Despite these initial advantages (though he was robbed of the element of surprise), Khrushchev clearly weighed those advantages against the cost of a likely American military response and possibly war. Realistically, he took the path of negotiations to resolve the crisis.

(b) *Khrushchev's control over the confrontation and negotiations.*—Like President Kennedy, Chairman Khrushchev kept a tight hold on the evolving confrontation and negotiations from the Soviet side. As

²²⁶ Macmillan, Harold. *At the End of the Day, 1961-1963*. New York. Harper & Row. 1973, p. 219. Schlesinger, a participant in managing the crisis, saw in the President a "combination of toughness and restraint, of will, nerve and wisdom, so brilliantly controlled, so matchlessly calibrated, that dazzled the world." (Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 841.)

²²⁷ Hilsman, op. cit., p. 227.

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 227.

noted above, the idea of missiles in Cuba germinated in his mind, but the decision to actually install them and accordingly accept the risk of war was made with the concurrence of the collective leadership.²²⁹

Once the crisis got rolling, Khrushchev kept things under control. He dictated the messages and conducted the negotiations for the Soviet side.²³⁰ He spent "one of the most dangerous nights" at the Council of Ministers office in the Kremlin, sleeping on a couch in his office with his clothes on.²³¹ "I was ready," he said, "for alarming news to come any moment, and I wanted to be ready to react immediately."²³²

Khrushchev "vividly" remembered those days after the President "issued an ultimatum." The exchange of correspondence he remembered "especially well" because he initiated it and "was at the center of the action on our end of the correspondence." And he added: "I take complete responsibility for the fact that the President and I entered into direct contact at the most crucial and dangerous stage of the crisis."²³³

(c) *Khrushchev's judgment on the negotiated settlement: "a triumph of common sense."*—At this point in his narrative Khrushchev went on to explain his version of the confrontation and negotiation which differed radically from that of the American. In brief, he placed the burden of responsibility on the President for backing down, emphasizing fears of a military takeover in Washington and over-emphasizing the importance of the President's noninvasion pledge. Khrushchev concluded his analysis with the following commentary which underscored the main point that the negotiated settlement was "a triumph of commonsense":

In our negotiations with the Americans during the crisis, they had, on the whole, been open and candid with us, especially Robert Kennedy. The Americans knew that if Russian blood were shed in Cuba, American blood would surely be shed in Germany. The American Government was anxious to avoid such a development. It had been, to say the least, an interesting and challenging situation. The two most powerful nations of the world had been squared off against each other, each with its finger on the button. You'd have thought that war was inevitable. But both showed that if the desire to avoid war is strong enough, even the most pressing dispute can be solved by compromise. And a compromise over Cuba was indeed found. The episode ended in a triumph of commonsense. I'll always remember the late President with deep respect because, in the final analysis, he showed himself to be sober-minded and determined to avoid war. He didn't let himself become frightened, nor did he become reckless. He didn't overestimate America's might, and he left himself a way out of the crisis. He showed real wisdom and statesmanship when he turned his back on right-wing forces in the United States who were trying to goad him into taking military action against Cuba. It was a great victory for us, though, that we had been able to extract from

²²⁹ On the decisionmaking process Khrushchev wrote: "I should mention that our side's policy was, from the outset, worked out in the collective leadership. It wasn't until after two or three lengthy discussions of the matter that we had decided it was worth the risk to install missiles on Cuba in the first place. It had been my feeling that the initial, as well as the subsequent, decisions should not be forced down anyone's throat. I had made sure to give the collective leadership time for the problem to crystallize in everyone's mind. I had wanted my comrades to accept and support the decision with a clear conscience and a full understanding of what the consequences of putting the missiles on Cuba might be—namely, war with the United States. Every step we had taken had been carefully considered by the collective." (Khrushchev, op. cit., p. 499.)

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 497.

²³¹ Khrushchev explained: "I didn't want to be like that Western minister who was caught literally with his pants down by the Suez events of 1956 and had to run around in his shorts until the emergency was over." (p. 497.)

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

Kennedy a promise that neither America nor any of her allies would invade Cuba.²³⁴

(7) Enhanced role of the Ambassador

(a) *Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin, a key communications link.*— Though this crisis was managed from the center, still some ambassadors, notably Dobrynin and Ormsby Gore in Washington, played important roles in the management of the confrontation and negotiations. Memoirs by American principals, particularly those of Robert Kennedy, revealed the prominent part played by Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin. During the period of deception, he conveyed his government's assurances to leading American officials that there were no missiles in Cuba, though Soviet sources have since denied that he had knowledge of the missiles and assert that he, like Kennedy, had been misled by Khrushchev.²³⁵ When the crisis got underway, he was very much in the center of things as the key communications link between Moscow and Washington. Dobrynin's meeting with the Attorney General, literally at the last moment on Saturday evening, October 27, may have been a deciding factor in Khrushchev's reversal, though Dobrynin's version of the encounter (as reported by Khrushchev) differed radically from the Kennedy account.²³⁶

(b) *British Ambassador Ormsby Gore, friend of the Kennedys.*— British Ambassador David Ormsby Gore was also featured prominently in the management of the crisis. Having the advantage of being a close friend of the President, he played a key role in reporting back to a most appreciative Prime Minister.²³⁷

In addition to reporting back extensively and from the closest inner circle of the White House, Ormsby Gore made a significant contribution in the unfolding negotiation by action when he suggested to the President that the quarantine line be drawn closer to Cuba so as to give the Soviet leadership time for reflection. The President, agreeing immediately, called Secretary of Defense McNamara, and over emotional protests from the Navy, issued the appropriate order. "This

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 500. In his "Last Testament," Khrushchev made these comments on Kennedy: "Kennedy was also someone we could trust. When he gave us public assurances that the United States would not organize an invasion of Cuba, either on its own or through its allies, we trusted him. We accepted the concession he was making and made a concession of our own by withdrawing our nuclear weapons from Cuba." Khrushchev also praised the President for his realism in handling the crisis. (Khrushchev, Last Testament, pp. 513-514.) For Khrushchev's retrospective views of Kennedy at the Vienna Conference, see pp. 497-498. He was impressed by Kennedy's grasp of international problems, his understanding of the policy of peaceful coexistence, and confidence in discussions.

²³⁵ Kennedy, op. cit., pp. 65-66. In an extensive article on Dobrynin by Anthony Austin published in The New York Times on June 4, 1979 (p. A6) it was pointed out that, according to "well-informed Soviet sources in Washington," when Dobrynin had misled Robert Kennedy in regard to the missiles, "he was not lying but had been misled himself." These Soviet sources say that Kennedy kept after the Ambassador on the subject sometimes visiting him as late as 2 or 3 a.m. "Thereupon, they recount," according to Austin, "Mr. Dobrynin sent a message to Nikita S. Khrushchev *** saying that the American Government seemed to be skeptical in regard to his assurance. There being no answer, according to this account, Mr. Dobrynin assured Mr. Kennedy a second time." The Austin story continues: "What happened next, the Soviet sources recount, was that Secretary of State Dean Rusk called Ambassador Dobrynin in and said, 'Anatoly, look here!' and showed him aerial photographs of the offensive missiles in place. 'That,' a Soviet source said, 'was when the Ambassador found out that the missiles were there. Yes, Khrushchev should not have acted as he did. An Ambassador who is thought to be lying has his credibility destroyed.'" Kennedy continued, nonetheless, to use Dobrynin as the principal Soviet channel for negotiating the crisis, as the above account describes, and according to Austin, "the pattern was set" for the unusually close relationship that Dobrynin has had with the State Department and White House even to this day.

²³⁶ Khrushchev, op. cit., pp. 497-498.

²³⁷ In the Prime Minister's favorable appraisal of the President's role in the crisis, he noted that the President was "well-served" by "our British representatives, Gore and Dean." (Macmillan, At the End of the Day, p. 219.)

decision was of vital importance in postponing the moment of irreversible action," wrote Schlesinger.²³⁸

(8) Staff support: Excellence of the executive committee

A final unique characteristic of this negotiating encounter was the staff support provided by the executive committee. As this study has shown thus far, negotiations in Soviet-American relations have taken many forms; they have not been confined just to formal exchanges over a conference table. But a persistent characteristic running through this experience that has often determined successful outcomes has been the quality of staff support given the principals and the ability of the principals to select the most reasonable and appropriate options.

The executive committee was by all measure an exceptional group of planners and advisers, representing a collection of uncommonly talented men with such special virtues as wisdom and vision, independence and boldness of thought; they were especially gifted with insight into human behavior and a capacity to act. Deliberations were carried on with complete equality; rank had no privileges. Accounts of their deliberations reflect a determined and honest effort to give the President viable options in managing the confrontation and conducting the negotiations. In commenting upon the President's satisfaction with the performance of this committee, Schlesinger observed: "The executive committee had proved a brilliant instrument of consideration and coordination."²³⁹

Singled out and credited with a high performance by his peers on the executive committee was Robert Kennedy. Mindful of the Japanese "sneak attack" on Pearl Harbor and the moral opprobrium it generated, he injected a moral quality into the deliberations by vigorously resisting airstrikes at the missile installations as the first option.²⁴⁰ He also provided the correct answer to the dilemma created by Khrushchev's letter of reversal. In general, he gave the group a coherent framework for discussion and proved to be a catalyst to searching inquiry by his constant questioning. As Schlesinger wrote: The President was "particularly proud of his brother, always balanced, never rattled, his eye fixed on the ultimate as well as on the immediate."²⁴¹

²³⁸ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 818.

²³⁹ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 832. Schlesinger went on: "McNamara, as usual, had been superb. Lewellyn Thompson [a specialist in Russian affairs, a professional diplomat who was to become Ambassador to the Soviet Union] had provided wise counsel; Edwin Martin had managed the Latin American side with tact and efficiency. If the President was disengaged in others, he was not, I think, especially surprised. As a whole, the government could hardly have performed better."

Except for General Maxwell Taylor, the President was "distressed", in the words of the Attorney General, by the predilection of the military representatives "to give so little consideration to the implications of steps they suggested." The President was "disturbed by this inability to look beyond the limited military field." Later when talking about this matter, he said, in Robert Kennedy's words, "we had to remember that they were trained to fight and to wage war—that was their life. Perhaps we would feel even more concerned if they were always opposed to using arms or military means—for if they would not be willing, who would be? But this experience pointed out for us all the importance of civilian direction and control and the importance of raising probing questions to military recommendations." (Kennedy, op. cit., p. 119.)

²⁴⁰ During the early deliberations when an air strike was felt by most to be the only course, Kennedy passed a note to the President: "I now know how Tojo felt when he was planning Pearl Harbor." (Ibid., p. 31.)

²⁴¹ Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 832. Sorensen wrote: "• • • the best performer in this respect was the Attorney General—not because of any particular idea he advanced, not because he presided (no one did), but because of his constant prodding, questioning, eliciting arguments and alternatives and keeping the discussions concrete and moving ahead, a difficult task as different participants came in and out." (Sorensen, op. cit., p. 679.)

(b) *Impact on Soviet-American relations: The beginning of détente*
 The implications of the missile crisis were far-reaching, for the crisis impacted on vital areas of international relations: The Sino-Soviet dispute quickened; NATO allies raised basic questions about U.S. leadership in Europe; and fundamental changes were to begin in Soviet-American relations.

Resolution of the missile crisis generated forces that were to bring on détente. Perhaps this was of transcending importance among its implications. When on October 26, Khrushchev, then the realist and pragmatist and no longer the revolutionary ideologue, communicated his intention of withdrawing the missiles, he denied himself, at least for the near future, the option of nuclear blackmail which had been a central feature of his foreign policy since 1957, and accordingly accepted the only alternative choice of seeking an accommodation with the United States. The Cuban experience had demonstrated to Khrushchev the validity of Kennedy's argument at Vienna for respecting the equilibrium of power and avoiding precipitous changes in it.²⁴²

Decisions were made in the aftermath to redress the balance of strategic power that had compelled the Soviet Union to back down—never again, the Soviet leadership said—but decisions were also made to establish a détente in Soviet-American relations. The Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in the coming year was the first concrete step in this direction.

Whether the missile crisis was a pivot or a turning point in East-West relations would seem to remain an open question, depending upon the choice of timeframes and perception of the meaning of détente.²⁴³ But with the perspective of nearly two decades, the evidence seems to suggest at this juncture at least a preference on both sides to continue the search for accommodation through negotiations but within a mutually acceptable balance of strategic power. As a negotiating encounter, the missile crisis may, therefore, be judged at some future time as one of the most important negotiations in the history of Soviet-American relations.

C. THE NUCLEAR TEST BAN TREATY, 1963: CONCLUDING NEGOTIATIONS TO CONTROL NUCLEAR TESTING

1. TEST BAN NEGOTIATIONS IN PERSPECTIVE

(a) *Prolonged stalemate in Geneva*

That the missile crisis was to fundamentally alter the course of Soviet-American relations was soon demonstrated by the conclusion of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in the summer of 1963. It was also demonstrated by other subsequent arrangements, such as the establishment of the so-called hotline of instant communications between Washington and Moscow. In general, these ameliorating measures were intended to lower the level of tension, facilitate the management

²⁴² Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 891.

²⁴³ Schlesinger wrote: "But the 13 days gave the world—even the Soviet Union—a sense of American determination and responsibility in the use of power which, sustained, might indeed become a turning point in the history of relations between east and west." (p. 841). Hillsman also discussed the question of whether the missile was a turning point in world history (p. 228).

of future crises, and clear the way for greater accommodation. Negotiations to control nuclear testing had stalled in Geneva. The missile crisis compelled a reordering of Soviet priorities that broke the prolonged stalemate.

(b) *A brief survey of negotiations, 1958-62*

Negotiations to ban nuclear testing began in the summer of 1958 amid growing international concern for the danger to human life from radioactive fallout and at a time of unilateral moratoria on nuclear testing.²⁴⁴

These negotiations were to continue along an uneven course for the next 4 years, perhaps the most difficult years of the cold war, moving, as Ambassador Arthur H. Dean, the head of the U.S. arms control delegation in Geneva, said, "through a tangle of proposals for both comprehensive and partial test bans."²⁴⁵ The test ban was considered separately; at times it was enmeshed in discussions on general disarmament. Progress had been achieved. Agreement was reached on a preamble, 17 articles and two annexes of a draft treaty for a comprehensive test ban including one article recognizing the principle of international inspection. But deteriorating East-West relations after the collapse of the May 1960 summit arrested further progress.²⁴⁶

The incoming Kennedy administration placed renewed emphasis on a comprehensive test ban treaty, and amid a complex of contending views within the national security community and within the administration itself, it judged the treaty to be advantageous to the Nation.^{246a} Thus, despite misgivings in some quarters on the home front and an unpromising international environment, the U.S. delegation began in 1961, with the President's full support, what Ambassador Dean noted,

were to be 2 years of hard, unrelenting, intensive, interesting, and challenging work. Consulting often with our own and British scientists, we missed no opportunity to discuss the test ban with Soviet representatives, on and off the record, whether at Geneva, at the United Nations, or in private diplomatic conversations which went on continuously. In spite of a solid wall of Soviet negatives, we kept on trying to adjust our proposals as science and political developments made changes possible. We were convinced of the importance of our goal, and we knew that after careful and persistent preparation, agreement with the Soviet Union could come suddenly and without warning, as had been the case with the Austrian State Treaty of 1955.²⁴⁷

At the Geneva meeting in the spring of 1961, Soviet disinterest in a test ban was quickly made known. Apparently pressured by Soviet

²⁴⁴ For a detailed discussion of the negotiations, see, Jacobson, Harold Karan and Eric Stein, *Diplomats, Scientists, and Politicians: The United States and the Nuclear Test Ban Negotiations*, Ann Arbor, Mich., University of Michigan Press, 1966, 538 pages; see also, Schlesinger, op. cit., pp. 448-505. This narrative draws heavily on Dean, Arthur H., *Test Ban and Disarmament: The Path of Negotiations*, Published for the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, Harper & Row, 1966, 154 pages. For the most recent study on the behavioral aspects of the test ban negotiations, see, Jonsson, Christer, *Soviet Bargaining Behavior: The Nuclear Test Ban Case*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1979, 266 pages. A commentary on Professor Christer's book stated: "Jonsson's exhaustive researches show how, contrary to Western assumptions about an established, unchanging Soviet negotiating stance, Soviet conduct in the test ban negotiations changed significantly over time. These changes coincided with major turning points in East-West relations and shifts in the balance of power between protreaty and antitreaty factions within the Soviet Union. While the test ban issue was of vital importance to the development of the Sino-Soviet dispute, the changes in Soviet negotiating behavior cannot readily be explained in terms of changes in China's influence. This thorough case study indicates that neither external nor domestic factors alone, but rather the complex interplay between the two, can account for Soviet bargaining behavior." Jonsson is an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Lund, Sweden.

²⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 87.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

^{246a} Ibid., p. 88.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 88-89.

V. KHRUSHCHEV'S LEGACY OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

That Khrushchev had revolutionized Soviet foreign policy and radicalized still further the Soviet style of negotiations during the decade he was in power, there seems to be little doubt. But to his credit in the test ban negotiations he added a variation of reason, civility, and diplomatic traditionalism to Soviet negotiating behavior.

In the large, Khrushchev had redirected the Soviet worldview from the inward continentalism of Stalin to the outward thrust of globalism into the Third World that has so characterized Soviet foreign policy since the mid-1950's. Khrushchev globalized Soviet foreign policy and expanded the diplomatic service, supported by an impressive intellectual infrastructure of institutes, to serve his outreaching policies. Under the misnomer of peaceful coexistence he had threatened and bullied the West in a series of grave challenges across the political frontier of the cold war until the showdown in the Cuban missile crisis compelled him to reassess his approach to the West on a more realistic appraisal of the balance of power and to reorder his priorities accordingly.

Thereafter, peaceful coexistence became a more meaningful definition of Soviet relations with the West, as shown by the conclusion of the partial nuclear test ban treaty and by the resort to the more traditional forms of diplomacy that became more characteristic of Soviet negotiating behavior. A much chastened Khrushchev, who in 1961 could threaten that only six H-bombs would be sufficient to annihilate the British Isles and nine others take care of France, could remark on a visit to Denmark in June 1964, "For centuries people have worked hard to plan and build such beautiful cities as Copenhagen, Moscow, Prague, Warsaw, Paris, London, and many others. Do people really think that anyone could be permitted to wipe all this out in a fraction of a minute?"¹ He could rebuke his Chinese adversaries in July 1963, saying that "only madmen" could hope to destroy capitalism by nuclear war; "a million workers would be destroyed for each capitalist. * * * There are people who see things differently. Let them. History will teach them."² And at the signing of the Soviet-East Germany Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation a year later he could depart from his prepared text for a moment and make the simple direct statement that "nuclear war is stupid, stupid, stupid. If you reach for the push-button you reach for suicide."³

¹ The Washington Post, June 17, 1964, p. A12, and July 12, 1961, p. A17; also, Facts on File, 1961, p. 278.

² Quoted in Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 905.

³ The New York Times, June 13, 1964, p. 1. Running through principal public statements by Khrushchev and others in the Soviet Government on the question of war and peace since the end of the missile crisis was the persistent theme on the irrationality of nuclear war. Such statements seemed to have been directed at both the Chinese as an act of self-justification for withdrawing the missiles and avoiding war, and at the United States as an indication of peaceful intent, at least for the time being.

Khrushchev had indeed come a long way toward staking a claim to statesmanship. In an introduction to the translation of "Khrushchev Remembers," Edward Crankshaw, a British scholar of Soviet affairs and biographer of Khrushchev, observed, "What was saddening was that he had in his makeup so many of the attributes of a great statesman." But "violence and lawlessness" was "his natural air"—particularly with respect to foreign policy. Yet in a final assessment Crankshaw wrote what has amounted to Khrushchev's legacy to the successor Brezhnev's regime, the legacy of peaceful coexistence:

It was one of Khrushchev's greatest achievements that with all his intermittent saber rattling, his threats, his deceptions, his displays of violence, he nevertheless broke out of the Stalinist mold and made it possible for the Western world to hope that a measure of coexistence more complete than he himself was yet ready to conceive might one day be realized.⁴

It was a peaceful coexistence, however, rooted solidly in the hard realities of military power and in an ideological commitment to the principle of "continuous struggle" against the West. For in the twilight of Khrushchev's reign the decisions were apparently made that were to bear fruit in the dramatic buildup of Soviet strategic missile forces in the late 1960's and early 1970's. As Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov warned veteran U.S. diplomat John McCloy in his Connecticut home upon giving assurances that the missiles and bombers were removed from Cuba, "You Americans will never be able to do this to us again."⁵

⁴ Crankshaw's introduction to *Khrushchev Remembers* p. xix.

⁵ Boblen, op. cit., pp. 495-496. For a variation of the quote, see, Newhouse, John, *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973, p. 68. The annotation in this source reads, "Never will we be caught like this again."